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**Poetry as a Theoretical Framework for Resurgence :
Indigenous Knowledge in the Verse of Fontaine, Bordeleau
and Bacon**

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Abstract

In the wake of the devastating residential school legacy, Indigenous critical theorists are rejecting the model of reconciliation proposed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission because it perpetuates colonial agendas. Their alternative to reconciliation is resurgence, or the use of Indigenous schools of thought in policy development. Resurgence springs from a celebration of Indigenous cultures and traditions. This thesis establishes the presence of resurgence in the poetry of three Indigenous female québécois poets of three generations: Joséphine Bacon, Virginia Pasamapéo Bordeleau, and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine. The first chapter is comprised of a literature review focusing on two subjects: 1) my right as a non-Native critic to analyze Indigenous literature, and 2) the rejection of reconciliation in favour of resurgence by leading Indigenous critical theorists in Canada. The second chapter identifies orality as a key aspect of resurgence, and its presence in the poetry of the three authors. The third chapter maps the poets' work in connection to land-based knowledge and stories, as further proof of the presence of resurgence. Through the analysis of remediation, decolonizing language and various other factors explored throughout this thesis, it is confirmed that Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine all incorporate resurgence into their work, thus inspiring readers of all cultures to take action on environmental and Indigenous issues.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous, reconciliation, resurgence, poetry, orality, remediation, anticolonialism, land, stories.

Resumé

Dans le sillage de l'héritage des pensionnats, les théoriciens critiques autochtones rejettent le modèle de réconciliation proposé par la commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada parce qu'elle perpétue le programme colonial. L'alternative proposée par ces théoriciens est la résurgence, ou l'utilisation des paradigmes autochtones dans le développement de politique. La résurgence jaillit d'une célébration des cultures et des traditions autochtones. Cette thèse établit la présence de résurgence dans la poésie de trois poètes autochtones québécoises de trois générations: Joséphine Bacon, Virginia Pasamapéo Bordeleau et Natasha Kanapé Fontaine. Le premier chapitre est composé d'une analyse documentaire qui focalise sur deux éléments: 1) mon droit en tant que critique « non autochtone » à analyser la littérature autochtone, et 2) le rejet de la réconciliation et la promotion de la résurgence par les principaux théoriciens critiques autochtones au Canada. Le deuxième chapitre établit l'oralité comme un aspect clé de la résurgence, et sa présence dans la poésie des trois auteurs. Le troisième chapitre établit la présence de la terre et des histoires dans la poésie, comme preuve supplémentaire de la présence de résurgence. Employant l'analyse de la remédiation, de la décolonisation de langue, et de divers autres facteurs explorés tout au long de cette thèse, il est confirmé que Bacon, Bordeleau et Fontaine intègrent la résurgence dans leurs travaux, ce qui inspire les lecteurs de toutes cultures à prendre des mesures sur les questions environnementales et autochtones.

MOTS CLÉS: Autochtone, la réconciliation, la résurgence, la poésie, l'oralité, le remédiation, l'anticolonialisme, la terre, des histoires.

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INTRODUCTION

[In] Indigenous poetry, the poet insists on reminding us of historic and current injustices and inequalities, and a calling to account. At the same time, the poetics are always trying to create a new elevated space to nurture the craving in our aesthetic souls, and create understanding, new possibilities, and possible new beginnings.

—Lillian Allen, p. 269

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in 2008 in response to the traumatic abuses sustained by Indigenous peoples in Canada during the time of residential schools. It was completed in June 2015, and the three commissioners, the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Dr. Marie Wilson, and Chief Wilton Littlechild, published a report with 94 recommendations to redress the legacy of residential schools. Some of the recommendations are broad, some are specific, but all are reasonable attempts at promoting Indigenous culture and establishing reconciliation. If these recommendations were implemented, Canadian Indigenous peoples would no longer face disproportionate levels of crime, poverty, murder and lack of education and would have access to essential human rights. The problem is that these recommendations are unlikely to be implemented in their entirety and in the spirit that the three commissioners intended. They have not been ratified, and the Canadian government is under no obligation to fulfil them. Furthermore, the recommendations are very general, with no clear quota that would establish their fulfillment. For example, section 10.2 states:

We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new

legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles: [ii] Improving education attainment levels and success rates (TRC 2).

This recommendation's vagueness renders implementing it expensive, thus dissuading the federal government from taking action. Indeed, most of the recommendations lack decisive benchmarks for the government to achieve.

Taiaiake Alfred, an activist, scholar, and an academic at the University of Victoria, expresses that Indigenous reconciliation as defined by the TRC is comprised of empty promises, with little hope of actually bringing about reconciliation. "[W]ithout massive restitution, including land, financial transfers and other forms of assistance to compensate for past harms and continuing injustices committed against our peoples, reconciliation would permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice" (Alfred *Wasàse* 152).

Education on reserves is a complex issue, since it is developed within the paradigm of Western culture. For example, in Ontario, the provincial EQAO testing that occurs annually in Grades 3, 6 and 9 is fundamentally colonial. It is offered only in English, and the questions and vocabulary concern Western culture and literature, making it hard for students on reserves to relate to. The result is that Indigenous students' scores are greatly inferior to those of their southern counterparts who are more acquainted with Western culture. "Improving education" on these reserves would therefore necessitate cultural appropriation, which is what Alfred argues is implicit in reconciliation.

Reconciliation not only causes cultural appropriation, it is also a way for the Canadian government to gain natural resources and land. For example, the provincial government of British Columbia has begun using the language of reconciliation in

negotiations with Indigenous peoples to secure a stable land base, to in turn promote more corporate investment in the B.C. Treaty Process (Corntassel 94). Using reconciliation establishes the “‘certainty’ of a land claim in such a way as to facilitate the extinguishment of original Indigenous title to the land” (Corntassel 94). This invested interest highlighted by Corntassel exemplifies questionable motives for reconciliation on the Canadian state’s part.

Many contemporary Indigenous critical theorists have rejected reconciliation because they consider it a corrupt avenue for governmental profit that would not ultimately promote healing in the wake of the residential school legacy, as the TRC claims. Rather than reconciliation, these theorists are in favour of resurgence. Resurgence encourages the incorporation of Indigenous cultural expression in everyday acts of life, from politics to cultural traditions; such practices are removed from any affiliation with the Canadian state. If political power were given exclusively to band councils, then policies would inevitably stem from Indigenous paradigms, creating a space in which Indigenous cultures could flourish. Utilizing the politics of resurgence in application to education, for example, would vastly change the outcomes of education on reserves. If curricula were no longer Eurocentric with implicitly colonial material that Indigenous students felt unable to connect with, they would likely have higher success rates in the classroom. Incorporating resurgence would allow students to celebrate their culture and combat the residential school legacy, which strove to eradicate Indigenous cultures.

As Indigenous students become educated in both colonial and Indigenous paradigms, through a combination of Canadian state schools and community education, they are better able to articulate and publish their struggles. This takes many forms, from

political activism to literary expression. Of all the literary forms, this thesis utilizes Québécois Indigenous poetry to exemplify the critical theory of various critics because of its accessibility and politicized nature. Poetry is often recited at pep rallies or performed as spoken word at political events.

This thesis will use the poetry of three female Indigenous poets: Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, Joséphine Bacon, and Virginia Pasamapéo Bordeleau. The Innu, formerly known as the Naskapi-Montagnais Indians, traditionally held the territories on the eastern portion of the Québec-Labrador peninsula. Poetry by female Innu writers tends to be particularly political, in light of the current crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW), and is often performed orally in conjunction with publication. Twenty-five-year-old Fontaine is a renowned spoken word artist who now lives in Montréal, and focuses her time on political activism in conjunction with artistic expression (Natasha, *mémoire*). Both she and Bacon, an Innu elder of 69 years of age, perform their work orally, and are from Pessamit, an Innu community located on the northern shore of the St. Lawrence, approximately 300 kilometres downstream of Québec City (Joséphine, *mémoire*). Originally called Betsiamites, after the river that flows through it, this community is where both Bacon and Fontaine learned the oral traditions of their ancestors. In contrast, although Bordeleau's work addresses such issues as colonialism, violence against women and climate change, she is not a public political activist, and performs relatively infrequently. She is Cree, and of a generation between Bacon and Fontaine, in her late forties (Virginia, *mémoire*). The uniting factor among these three poets is the way in which their work exemplifies the cultural expression and celebration associated with resurgence.

The first chapter of this thesis addresses my role as a non-native critic of Indigenous literature and critical theory, and the necessity for integrity when engaging with this subject. As a cultural outsider, I must tread carefully so as not to involuntarily perpetuate institutional colonialism. Arnold Krupat and Renate Eigenbrod are two non-native authors who discuss the role of the non-native critic within the realm of Indigenous studies. Their findings are comparable to the framework in which I am operating; both suggest that when embarking on critique of Indigenous issues, one must proceed with caution, taking special care to write informed theory.

Leanne Simpson, a critical theorist and activist based out of Peterborough, Ontario, articulates the ease of falling into the trap of accidentally perpetuating these stereotypes, given that we are surrounded by neo-colonialism:

Part of being Indigenous in the 21st century is that regardless of where or how we have grown up, we've all been bathed in a vat of cognitive imperialism, perpetuating the idea that Indigenous Peoples were not, and are not, thinking peoples—an insidious mechanism to promote neo-assimilation and obfuscate the historic atrocities of colonialism (L. Simpson *Dancing* 32).

It is easy to make assumptions if one is unaware of the cultural norms within a given paradigm, which result in the perpetuation of colonial norms. To avoid these pitfalls, both Krupat and Eigenbrod approach Indigenous studies humbly, acknowledging that their cultural background is colonial. Krupat considers his approach of studying Indigenous issues comparable to postmodernism, in that both hold “incredulity toward meta-narratives” (Krupat 8). In his case, metanarratives refer to the infiltration of colonialism in academic institutions. I am optimistic, and hope that the growing trend towards politically welcoming Indigenous Studies departments and the inclusion of Indigenous modes of thought in other departments (such as departments of education), will lead to a

more just future. My narrative approach throughout this thesis is an attempt to align with the culturally sensitive practices of Krupat and Eigenbrod. I acknowledge that as an outsider, my understanding of Indigenous cultures is limited. Yet my work seeks to bring recognition to the exciting research of many Indigenous critical theorists, and to use their theories to illuminate the political potential and cultural transformation of the three poets.

In the spirit of exercising cultural sensitivity while critiquing Indigenous literature, the first part of Chapter 1 is an investigation into the colonial history of the English language. Emma LaRocque, a professor at the University of Manitoba, testifies that the English language, the language in which this thesis is written, has been historically used as a political tool of cultural eradication. Only within the past few decades have Indigenous writers reclaimed the colonial languages of English and French as tools to combat colonialism. It is important to acknowledge that this transformation in linguistic power is the result of a long history of trauma in residential schools, where Indigenous students were forced to forget their own languages and to live in English and French. LaRocque explains that there was a time lapse after Indigenous students graduated from residential school, before they began writing and publishing in the colonial languages in which their instruction was executed. During this lapse, they did not publish at all.

The second chapter investigates the existence of orality, an Indigenous tradition, in modern poetry post the cultural genocide of residential schools. Innu and Cree cultures are rooted in orality, and the transmission of cultural knowledge through poetry is founded in oral storytelling. Remediation is the process whereby a message is removed from one medium and transposed to another. When studying the works of Fontaine, Bacon and Bordeleau, the oral tradition of their storytelling heritage is incorporated into

their works, constituting remediation. This orality is present in the distinctly oral word choices and phrases, as well as the use of repetition; and narrative style.

Of the four aspects of orality, narrative style is the most obvious when reading the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine. When reading printed oral poetry, the reader is a spectator imagining the poet reading aloud in his or her mind. Tim Ingold claims that reading “is not just to listen but to remember. If writing speaks, it does so with the voices of the past, which the reader hears as though he were present in their midst” (15). Readers piece together abstractions amassed from fragments of cultural knowledge and associations, and imagine the voice of the poet in their mind’s ear. The following is from Joséphine Bacon’s *Bâtons à message/Tshissinuatshitakana*:

Papakassik, ce soir,
tu m'offres ton omoplate
chasseur démuni,
je n'ai pas besoin de carte,
car j'étends ton omoplate
dans un feu de braise
qui me guide vers toi.
Éparpillé,
tu me pardonnes
tu nous délivres
de la famine
je te vois :
demain, tu m'attendras
dans la toundra (Bacon 48).

This passage is raw with emotion and visceral imagery: the shoulder blade of *Papakassik* stretched across a fire of live coals; the mentioning of scattered body parts. The second-person narration (“you offer me,” “you forgive me”) implies that she is speaking directly to us, the reader; yet Bacon also utilizes first-person narration (“I”). Fontaine and Bordeleau also employ this narrative alternation, and the effect is thoroughly conversational. Most writers choose one narrative style and adhere to it throughout their

work, but a flip-flop approach is unique; I argue that it illustrates the incorporation of orality, and subsequently traditional Indigenous culture and resurgence, in print.

The third chapter examines the shift from reconciliation to resurgence, using the work of predominant Indigenous theorists to map and contextualize the move away from reconciliation; it also addresses resurgence in the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine. Although resurgence remains in its early stages of development, it is an idea that is steadily gaining popularity in the public arena and among academics. It is interesting to note that many theorists have imagined the idea of resurgence using different names. For example, “Felt theory,” the “peoplehood model” and a “dialogics of the oppressed,” published by Dian Million, Jeff Cornassel and Emma LaRocque respectively, are all synonymous with resurgence.

With this burgeoning movement away from reconciliation, Indigenous peoples are taking back control. This includes two arenas: firstly, the search for political autonomy, which has already been instated in several band councils, including Kahnakà:ke, a Mohawk reserve outside of Montréal. Audra Simpson investigates this reserve in a case study, advocating for Indigenous sovereignty within and apart from the Canadian state. She sees this as a necessary aspect of resurgence, encouraging all reserves to seek political autonomy. Political autonomy is an asset of resurgence, but is only effective if done so with justice and improved support to all members of the community, something the Canadian state is currently lacking. For example, the federal government funds education on reserves, yet the funding per Indigenous student is vastly inferior to students not living on reserves. Funding provided to schools on reserves is \$2,000 less per student as compared to provincial funding (Laboucane). Again, the result of inferior education is

a lessened ability to advocate for and implement community improvements and cultural assertion, which dampens resurgence at the political, cultural and artistic level.

The second way in which autonomy is being asserted is through cultural expression in artistic and everyday capacities. While not all literature written by Indigenous authors is an expression of resurgence, resurgence features heavily in Indigenous writing that engages in Indigenous culture. In an attempt to identify Indigenous literature, Emma LaRocque provides the following logic:

Native writers record historical and personal incursions, social upheavals, a range of emotions, and unique individual and cultural backgrounds, and struggle for hope and determination. The earlier style of recording these many realities is often a mixture of rhetoric, extraordinary insight, moral outrage, and dignified poignancy. Literary devices are both inventive and prosaic. The argumentation combines historical and current Aboriginal traditions, including resistance and postcolonial strategies. The writing is more complex than meets the eye (LaRocque 18).

Although it is difficult to encapsulate a type of literature in one definition, LaRocque's attempt addresses many of the issues on which Indigenous writers focus. Her definition also refers to "the earlier style," which according to her criterion, extends to contemporary styles. Recent publications by such Indigenous authors as those referenced in this thesis do indeed portray resistance and post-colonial strategies. Resurgence is not only a resistance against colonialism, but also fosters a strong connection to the land and culture, as is affirmed by numerous theorists including Leanne Simpson and Glen Coulthard. Since colonialism is sometimes manifested as a disconnection from the land, resurgence seeks to reverse this severance.

As previously alluded to, the works of many Indigenous authors can be categorized as works of resurgence. Natasha Kanapé Fontaine's *Manifeste Assi* is an apt example.

She has published a number of collections of poetry, all dealing with the repression and flourishing of Innu culture, *Manifeste Assi* being the most rich with political outcry. In it she not only questions the future of her culture, but also laments the hardships it has undergone and its relation to the natural world. Her engagement with the land is an expression of resurgence that extends from her home in Québec all across the nation and the planet.

Où vas-tu le monde
où vas-tu le monde mes draps jaunis
par le temps
où vas-tu courir quand les cigales hurlantes
.....
Je t'écirai un manifeste
un manifeste amour un manifeste papier
Je t'entends batter mon destin
mourir le nordique et l'austral
suer d'amour entre les taigas
les lichens
envenimer les vieilles coutumes (Fontaine 12-13).

Her style of writing is truly a manifesto in the oral sense of the word, in that orality is conveyed through her verses. It is easy to imagine her reading her words aloud and igniting political action among her listeners, a subject explored in detail in the final section of this thesis.

Bordeleau's *De rouge et de blanc* is also an expression of resurgence by virtue of its political and Cree cultural themes, yet her verses are decidedly less fiery than those of Fontaine. Bordeleau focuses on female empowerment, which I consider to be in reaction to the MMIW crisis.

Rêvons d'une aube tranquille,
rêvons d'un peuple de femmes
qui marche avec ses rêves
au son de son cœur tambour.
Nous voulons, avec la tendresse des outardes,

nous prendre aux pièges
des douceurs boréales,
avec des gestes de peau tannée,
raclée, séchée, mâchée
peinte couleur terre d'ombre brûlée,
à mains nues (Bordeleau 61).

She celebrates a connection to the land and her culture, through descriptions of traditional practices such as tanning leather by hand, an example of one of the many traditions that are becoming less common. This connection to land and culture, found often in Bordeleau's work, is what is defined as resurgence

Resurgence in Indigenous poetry is similar to the act of storytelling. Poetry can be polished, but it can also be raw, emotional and callous. In contrast to prose, which is limited by conventional syntax to ensure universal understanding, grammatical frameworks do not restrain poetic expression..Similar to poetry, orality lacks structure. Storytelling conveys lessons, experiences and hopes through performance; implicated in performance is interaction with the audience, a dialogue with room for dramatic pauses, laughter breaks, and adaptability for an audience's short attention span. Since poetry and storytelling both lack structure, it is therefore not surprising that Bacon, Fontaine and Bordeleau have had so much success communicating their storytelling culture through poetry.

Creation stories, overtly referred to throughout their works, are the original Indigenous basis for literature, and convey lessons through the personification of animals and the trials and tribulations of their ancestors. The strong connection between creation stories and oral poetry is irrefutable, since both are used to propagate cultural values and norms in a community. The difference is that where creation stories may be shared within families, oral poetry and spoken word is used to address a wider community. Incidentally,

it is the communal aspect with which both forms are executed that inexorably links them: both require an audience and are rooted in orality. Simpson considers stories to be a necessary part of the theoretical framework of decolonizing theories because it propagates Indigenous paradigms. Her assertion, discussed towards the end of this thesis, is irrefutable when studying the poetry of Fontaine, Bordeleau and Bacon. These three poets of three generations have all produced collections that celebrate Indigenous cultures, call political issues to attention, and aid in the manifestation of resurgence through literature.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the claims made in the second and third chapters. In sections 1.1 and 1.2, I investigate my right to analyze Indigenous literature and theory as a non-Native critic. I begin with an examination of language. This thesis is written in English, the language with which Indigenous students in the residential school system were persecuted. Yet by addressing such issues of marginalization, the English language can be a tool of decolonization. The second section examines insider and outsider rights, with reference to Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers. Emma LaRocque, a professor at the University of Manitoba of Cree descent, argues that there is no singular way to approach Indigenous critical theory:

I do not approach scholarship only from a cultural location, especially one that is often reductively and categorically classified as ‘different,’ which I take to be the colonizer’s strategy. Rather, as one who comes from a dispossessed people, I engage with my research. A key part of this necessarily and unavoidably means disturbing the re-settler canon (LaRocque 29).

This thesis will attempt to “engage” with research by comparing a multitude of viewpoints, carefully attempting to disturb colonial agendas that have been intrinsic to the Canadian state in post-colonial history, but which are now widely-recognized as destructive. It is easy to make assumptions about Indigenous scholarship if one is unfamiliar with those paradigms; I therefore compare the work of several Indigenous and non-Native scholars in order to provide an instructional framework with which to proceed.

Section 1.3 maps the transition from reconciliation to resurgence in Canada, a relatively recent construct that will shape the future of politics, critical theory and literature. The works of several Indigenous critical theorists are compared to provide a solid theoretical basis for the rejection of reconciliation in favour of resurgence. The establishment of these frameworks is necessary before applying them to Indigenous literature in chapters two and three. Post-colonial, critical, and libratory theories, articulated through Western rhetoric, have been the predominant modes of thought for exposing and challenging colonialism, and striving to shift the Canadian politic (L. Simpson 31). Yet many critical theorists argue that such bodies of theory are no longer acceptable ways of rejecting contemporary residual colonialism, and advocate for the manifest use of Indigenous resurgence when dealing in politics and academia. Resurgence has sprung in the wake of the relatively recent attempt of the Canadian state to reconcile with Indigenous peoples for all lasting trauma due to residential schools and displacement. Glen Coulthard, Leanne Simpson, Audra Simpson, Dian Million and Taiaiake Alfred all favor resurgence over reconciliation, since the latter would result in the avoidance of all dialogue regarding the history of cultural genocide, which is required for continual growth away from colonialism. Some communities have achieved near-political autonomy, for example, the inhabitants of Kahnakà:ke (Oka), who have arguably done so by rejecting reconciliation in favour of resurgence. Since neoliberal hegemonic discourses prevail in Canadian government, the above-mentioned theorists consider resurgent political action in Indigenous rhetoric the key to gaining total political autonomy and freedom from colonial confines, at least in terms of self-government. In answer to this shift in critical theory, Jeff Corntassel proposes Responsibilities,

Resurgence, and Relationships as a triad for the future relationship between Indigenous communities and the Canadian state in the place of Rights, Reconciliation and Resources.

One final point requiring clarification before beginning the first chapter is the use of the terms “Native”, “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous”. Critical theorists from different communities may use the first two terms, and so they appear in quotes throughout the thesis. However, I will always use the term “Indigenous”, since it is the term used by the majority of contemporary Indigenous theorists.

1.1 Decolonizing Language

Emma LaRocque discusses the English language as a dichotomous tool for both colonial institutions to propagate racism, and as an Indigenous tool to combat colonialism in her article “When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990”. The relationship between Indigenous peoples and colonial languages is extremely complex; for example, English and French instruction occurred in residential schools, where it replaced the students’ maternal languages. “Native writers have a complicated relationship with the English language, a relationship that reflects more than 500 years of cultural, linguistic, and political appropriations, exchanges, and confrontations” (LaRocque 19). Language and culture are intrinsically related. Since both language and culture were stripped of an entire generation of Native youth across Canada, the residential school experience is categorized as a cultural genocide. It is understandable that the survivors of Residential Schools were not inclined to publish given that they were taught to speak only colonial languages, and those languages were associated with

trauma. Indeed, only in the 1970s did Indigenous writers begin to publish for a national readership (LaRocque 19).

The importance of addressing the issue of colonized language is essential because neoliberal hegemonic discourses are still manifest in modern dialogue. A contemporary example of how language has been used as a colonial tool of destruction is provided in Leanne Simpson's article "Land as Pedagogy: Nioshnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," where she describes a negative interaction with the *Huffington Post*. She had previously written an article on Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike on Turtle Island, regarding the "fight for Indigenous nationhood, sovereignty, and a fair and just relationship with Canada" (L. Simpson *Pedagogy* 295). The article was first published with the title "Fish Broth & Fasting", and after initial reluctance, Simpson permitted the *Huffington* to republish it. However, they changed the title, sensationalizing it to "Think Chief Spence Is on a 'Liquid Diet'? I Think You're Ignorant" (L. Simpson *Pedagogy* 295). This offensive alteration embodies social discord as described by LaRocque's analysis of resistance discourse and language. The fact that the title of Simpson's piece was warped from one of respectful dialogue to accusation is a testament to the way in which "Indigenous Peoples have little agency to represent themselves within mainstream media, which has boxed [Indigenous People] inside the confines of the same recycled stereotypes it insists upon invoking" (L. Simpson *Pedagogy* 295).

One common result of racist encounters with institutions is *internalization*, or the struggling of self-acceptance in the face of racial and cultural rejection (LaRocque 22). In Simpson's case, language was warped to suggest that she should be ashamed of her culture, a type of struggle that is by no means uncommon. During the era of residential

schools, Indigenous pupils would have struggled with internalization while experiencing a cultural genocide. A natural consequence of internalization is being ashamed of one's culture because it does not conform to the expectations of governmental agencies in residential schools. This standard of conformation is referred to as the *white ideal* (LaRocque 22). In contemporary times, internalization is a language-related obstacle for many Indigenous people who strive to express themselves politically and in day-to-day life, since misrepresentation in overt and subtle ways can cause undue hardship for Indigenous people. One of the goals of this thesis is to aid in the rejection of the white ideal, by promoting the reading of Indigenous literature from Indigenous perspectives, and also by promoting resurgence in political and literary venues. These topics are explored in successive chapters.

L. Simpson taught at the University of Manitoba for a number of years before quitting, believing that her contributions to that academic institution perpetuated colonial agendas (L. Simpson, *Islands*). Despite this reluctance to engage full-time with academia, she continues to publish in academic journals, and obviously values the written word. As an activist, she seeks to instigate political change through all means possible, but prefers communicating in-person rather than through publication: "When mediated through print or recording devices, [the relationships between performers and audience] become either reduced (technology limits that activity) or unilateral (as in print, film, or video, when the creator cannot respond to the reaction of the audience)" (L. Simpson *Dancing* 34). The result of this unilateral relationship is that it is no longer transformative, and no longer emergent (L. Simpson *Dancing* 34). It is useful to acknowledge that oral communication

is essential when inspiring activism, but written culture is also essential in disseminating and discussing political information to a larger audience.

Bordeleau also considers the written word to be a tool of anti-colonialism. She explains her gratitude for the existence of the alphabet, and its malleability that is so appealing to a wordsmith.

Au début, il y eut ce tremblement intérieur, un frémissement devant les blessures de la vie ou encore ce mouvement comme une danse lors des moments heureux. Puis l'alphabet est arrivé. Je croyais que je n'y arriverais jamais, seule dans cette classe qui ne savait pas la langue de l'autre. Ensuite les mots sont nés, les phrases, les paragraphes complets jamais dévoilés, toujours cachés (Bordeleau 7).

This quotation proves the Bordeleau's excitement about written language. Although her culture is deeply rooted in orality, she wholly embraces written culture as a means of expressing herself and her poetry. This speaks to the tremendous abilities of writing to relieve artists of their artistic burdens, allowing them to share their art with the world. *"D'écrire m'aidait à respirer, traduire pour moi seule ce besoin d'aller au-delà du quotidien parfois si lourd et dense"* (Bordeleau 7, original emphasis). Indeed, her poetry reflects this imagery of requiring release, something that writing has afforded her :

Ma Terre-Mère,
tu nages en moi
en d'éclatantes coulées verbales
que j'accueille par brassées folles,
essoufflée.
On t'imagine éventrée
sous des caresses de soc,
écumeuse de noir fécondité (Bordeleau 51).

The imagery used in this passage describes Bordeleau's relation to mother earth, and is also a metaphor for her relation to her poetry, given the "vibrant verbal spring" that wells up inside her. Her verse aids in the decolonization of the French language because she addresses issues of colonialism in French rather than Cree, her native language.

Indeed, despite the historical uses of colonial languages to obliterate cultures, LaRocque emphasizes that language can be used as a tool of empowerment, re-creation and renaming (21). She explains that “literacy in and of itself is a great human achievement; obviously, literacy is a two-edged sword dependent on whether humans use it for oppressive or emancipatory purposes” (LaRocque 21). This paradox accounts for the history of residential schools as well as the more recent movement for Indigenous expression and political activism that has accelerated over the past four decades. Even more than French, the English language unites many Indigenous cultural groups within Canada as the *lingua franca*, and thereby ironically provides them with a tool of decolonization. Certainly, the fact that LaRocque disseminates her theory in print and in the English language proves her approval and encouragement of the written English word as a political tool. “English is now serving to unite us, and in many ironic respects, serving to decolonize us” (LaRocque 21). The “us” refers to the many Indigenous groups across Canada, as well as non-Indigenous people, all of whom must collaborate to eliminate colonial agendas.

1.2 Insider/Outsider Rights

Contemporary colonialism remains manifest in Canada, and so it is understandable why Indigenous critics of Indigenous literature seek to protect against harmful and destructive criticism of their culture and literature. Wendy Rose explains that some neo-colonial researchers believe that with minimal participation in Indigenous culture, they are entitled to act as interpreters of Indigenous culture, which is the danger of being a

non-Native critic (quoted in Eigenbrod *Travelling Knowledges* 44). Due to this self-entitlement of non-Native critics, it is reasonable that Indigenous communities designate non-Natives as outsiders, regardless of how respectful their research is.

A major part of colonial neoliberal discourses are binaries such as “West/Rest, Us/Them, outsider/insider,” the continued use of which results in the propagation of colonial values. Dominick LaCapra coined the term *scapegoat mechanisms*, whereby “insiders” (in reference to settlers/colonists) generate purity by projecting undesirable traits and metaphorical pollution onto “outsiders” (in reference to Natives), (quoted in Krupat 19). Examples of scapegoat mechanisms are evident in all negative colonial stereotypes about Indigenous people. We must therefore be aware of loaded binaries and scapegoat mechanisms while engaging with Indigenous culture, so as to avert using them. Indeed, they cannot be ignored all-together, since only through maintaining dialogue with the colonial past can the present develop into an arena of shared ideas free of oppression and marginalization.

It is ironic to note that while traditional binaries used “outsider” to refer to Indigenous people, in contemporary studies, being an outsider can now refer to non-Natives. Renete Eigenbrod’s *Travelling Knowledges: Positioning the Im/migrant Reader of Aboriginal Literatures in Canada* discusses the use of this term. “[B]y reversing the imperialistic centre-periphery dualism, Indigenous writers centre themselves and place non-Aboriginals on the margin, looking in from the outside” (*Travelling Knowledges* 41). Eigenbrod does not state whether “insiders” or “outsiders” are more adept at critically analyzing Indigenous literature; she chooses to remain neutral with regards to any hierarchy of interpretation. “Insiders” tend to take for granted what “outsiders” may have

a fresh perspective on, due to the fact that they bring with them the knowledge of a different set of beliefs. “Insider” knowledge can therefore be both an advantage and disadvantage, since it sways interpretations and critiques. For example, in the discipline of psychoanalysis, the positioning of an “outsider” is integral for the critique of “insider” information. I consider both standpoints (insider and outsider) to be integral to the interpretation of any subject, be it the subconscious or an entire culture.

An integral part of understanding the outsider/insider dichotomy is the discussion of Native versus western paradigms, or specific sets of beliefs rooted in distinct cultural heritage and philosophical beliefs. For example, the idea of truth in different paradigms is conflicting: Anishinaubae culture supports that there is no absolute truth, and speakers in that culture will begin with “w’daeb-awae,” a promise to cast one’s words and voice only as far as one’s vocabulary and perception will permit (*Travelling Knowledges* 4). In anglophone-Ontario culture (the predominant culture with which I identify), speakers presume to speak the truth, and in my opinion, do not open with such humble reminders of their own limited understanding of the absolute truth. Nomadic conceptualizations, traditionally circular, do not offer the stability of authentic or false discourses; they do not fit into a western paradigm, and this is one of the ways in which the two paradigms differ.

Eigenbrod emphasizes the necessity of acknowledging one’s own paradigm when analyzing any body of literature, and of being aware of personal biases one may have, both positive and negative. The literary genre *bildungsroman* is assigned by outsider critics to literature written in “virtually all countries undergoing decolonization because it is the Western form of discourse that constitutes identity in terms of relation to origin”

(*Travelling Knowledges* 46). Using Western labels to situate bodies of literature is typical of colonial institutions, since individuals within Western paradigms have the need to categorize information that does not fit into their own school of thought. Using such labels as “bildungsroman” is therefore a potential pitfall of non-Native critics. In order to further the decolonization of the field of Indigenous studies, I will opt for not using such colonial terms.

Critical theory is most productive when not concretely defined and confined by the tangible borders of a definition, in the same way that frontiers (the division of two cultures, one necessarily more powerful than the other) must be eradicated to objectively develop useful critical Indigenous theory. Although theorizing about completely eradicating borders and prejudice is optimistic, it is necessary to be aware of the baggage associated with belonging to one side of that border, as will be discussed throughout this section. Krupat defines postmodernism as “incredulity toward meta-narratives” (8). Meta-narratives are discourses that make claims regarding epistemological truths in the sciences or philosophy (Krupat 8). There are superficial similarities between Indigenous studies and postmodernism, in that both reject meta-narratives. In the case of postmodernism, those meta-narratives are discourses that make claims regarding epistemological truths in the sciences or philosophy (Krupat 8). In Indigenous studies, the meta-narratives are colonial hegemonic discourses that are propagated through the use of such terms as *Bildungsroman*.

I once gave a presentation on the Oka crisis in a French language undergraduate class. Following my presentation, one of my peers expressed racist opinions towards Indigenous peoples, which do not merit being repeated. Eigenbrod and Krupat would

argue that my peer was imprisoned by his colonial paradigm and cultural heritage, an argument with which I would agree. Although he himself is not necessarily racist, what he said was, and I challenged him. This brings to question what my other peers felt about our debate, as none in the class contributed. I cannot be sure, but it is likely that many of them agreed in varying degrees both with him and with me. Each paradigm holds a multiplicity of experiences; not all people within a given paradigm hold the exact same beliefs. The cultural differences that restrict the understanding of non-Indigenous students while learning about Indigenous issues are profoundly rooted in life experience, yet all individuals within a paradigm hold slightly different life experiences. Eigenbrod questions whether scholarship as a “tool for changing reality” is actually effective when most of the scholars are “white, middle-class academics whose freedom to move in any possible way differs distinctly from Aboriginal people’s experiences of multiple boundaries” (*Travelling Knowledges* xiii). At the end of my presentation I felt that I was an inferior advocate for decolonizing my peers, that someone who knew more about Indigenous beliefs would be better suited to defending Indigenous struggles.

Yet my initial assumption that I was unworthy as an advocate was shortsighted. The multiplicity of experiences of students within any given class is similar to the way in which there is no one, true “Native experience”. Within the paradigm of Indigenous cultures, there are many subcultures and experiences. Therefore, a class of students not belonging to a Native paradigm would be unaware, to varying degrees, of the traumatic residential school legacy. The Canadian education system lacks sufficient Native history and culture instruction, and so the students are not necessarily to blame for their

ignorance. It is the responsibility of the state, however, to enrich the education of its students regarding not only residential schools, but also contemporary Indigenous culture.

Had there been an Indigenous student in the class, the most offensive comments may not have been made, but if they were made, that student would very likely have felt marginalized by the responses of their classmate. Since colonial conceptualizations of culture are static, and deny multiple experiences, they tend to impose one all-encompassing, monolithic version of Indigenous culture (*Travelling Knowledges* 40). In Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*, the protagonist Gabriel Quinn has short hair and is a research scientist for a pharmaceutical company, two features that lead other characters to assume he is "white." His occupation and physical attributes do not lend themselves to a stereotypical Indigenous heritage, and he experiences internalized colonialism, questioning his own "Native-ness".

An example of monolithic Native experiences is the notion that in order to be "Indigenous" one must live, or have lived, on a reservation. In her article "Diasporic Longings: (Re)Figurations of Home and Homelessness in Richard Wagamese's Work," Eigenbrod critically analyzes membership to reserves, home to many Indigenous people in Canada. Although many people call reserves home, she points out that reserves are already a consequence of dispossession, since colonial powers established them in order to liberate access to natural resources. She refers to this historic displacement as the removal of the *spatial anchor* (Eigenbrod *Diasporic Longings* 137). All cultural groups have spatial anchors, no matter how far removed: Muslims have Mecca, Christians, Palestinians and Jews have Jerusalem. If we consider rural, non-developed wilderness to be the spatial anchor of Canadian Indigenous groups, in the sense of a hunter/gatherer

lifestyle, displacement to reserves with the inability to “live off the land” is a removal of that spatial anchor. This constitutes part of cultural genocide the Canadian state committed against Indigenous people, among other actions such as the implementation of Residential schools.

What is interesting to note while exploring the role of spatial anchors within cultural groups is that the members of those groups need never visit them, yet will hold strong cultural ties to them. Although many Muslims feel a strong affinity for Mecca, many will never take part in a pilgrimage to it; however, there are strong cultural associations with that spatial anchor. It is for this reason that Eigenbrod refers to reserves as new spatial anchors for Indigenous people. Not all Natives have been to a reserve, but have cultural or distant family ties to one (*Diasporic Longings* 137). Eigenbrod does not define how many spatial anchors a cultural group can hold, (for example, a reservation as well as “nature” for Indigenous people), and whether personal histories can also be considered spatial anchors despite the absence of any physical, geographical quality. It is likely that individuals of mixed ancestry (for example, Thomas King, of Cherokee and Greek/German-American descent) hold multiple spatial anchors.

Eigenbrod points out that an integral aspect of spatial anchors is that they inspire a sense of belonging, yet reserves are not necessarily places of comfort for everyone; indeed, many Indigenous people flee them due to poverty and institutional problems that often exist on reserves (*Diasporic Longings* 138). For this reason, considering reserves as spatial anchors is conflicting. I understand this problem to be resolved with the viewpoint that individual experience is extremely subjective, and that there is no way to generalize one experience for all members of a nation. Generalizations such as the notion of reserve

as home are useful for referring to the majority of community members. At least from the perspective of Indigenous literature, there is an undeniable theme of “coming home to the reserve after a long time away” as a healing process (Eigenbrod *Diasporic Longings* 137). For example, this is true in the novel *Through Black Spruce* by Joseph Boyden, whereby the protagonist and her sister (Annie and Suzanne Bird) leave their reserve to work as models and to party in New York. When they return home to the reserve, it is after overcoming external and internal struggles, and having gained wisdom and maturity.

Annie and Suzanne experience the two types of diaspora Eigenbrod identifies as common in the Native experience: spatial and ideological. *Spatial diaspora* is the separation of an Indigenous group from their land, while *ideological diaspora* is the alienation from one’s stories. “[T]his alienation, the removal from the voices and echoes of the ancestors, is the attempt to destroy collective consciousness,” and is therefore part of the cultural genocide imposed by the Canadian government (Eigenbrod *Diasporic Longings* 136). The Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke have undergone both spatial and ideological diaspora over the course of the past 400 years. Eigenbrod states that Indigenous people have undergone spatial and/or ideological diaspora, and everyone else is the descendant of an immigrant: “[i]n order to change relationships among different social groups, hierarchical structures that regulate how we ‘help the deprived’ need to be replaced in the context of a realization that we are *all* tourists and are *all* in need of a guide” (Eigenbrod *Diasporic Longings* 149). However, not all Indigenous people are tourists, and may not appreciate Eigenbrod’s suggestion that they be grouped with colonialists.

Indeed, making any sorts of generalizations about Indigenous people as a group would be discriminatory. It is worthwhile to explore Indigenous Identity since this thesis seeks to study Indigenous theory and poetry, but in proceeding, will exercise the utmost respect possible. My findings indicate that like many theoretical definitions, the boundaries of Indigenous identity are not fixed and evade strict classification. Indeed, there exist multiple definitions, some of which are in conflict with each other. Let us begin with the classification of Taiaiake Alfred, a renowned Indigenous critical theorist and academic based out of the University of Victoria.

Experiences of spatial and ideological diaspora are common amongst Indigenous people, yet not all Indigenous people experience diaspora, nor can these experiences be measured to determine one's "nativeness." Alfred's *Peace, Power, Righteousness: an Indigenous Manifesto* is politically explosive, accusing the Canadian government of colonial agendas. This work, as a part of a discussion on colonialism, outlines the combined factors that render someone Indigenous. He argues that identity is measured by one's relationship in a community: "[h]owever knowledgeable and rooted one may be, one cannot be truly Indigenous without the support, inspiration, reprobation, and stress of [an Indigenous] community" (Alfred xvi). Therefore, exposure to and interaction with Indigenous culture assigns Indigenous status. This does not necessitate growing-up on a reserve, but does require exposure to Indigeneity at one point in one's life.

Alfred's definition is somewhat exclusive when considering the residential school survivors who did not have the opportunity to partake in an Indigenous community during their years as captive students. Similarly, the Sixties Scoop refers to the mass removal of Canadian Indigenous youth from their communities in the 1960s, who were

then adopted by American families and raised in a “white” culture that allowed no expression of their heritage. I have met a victim of the Sixties Scoop who considers himself Indigenous, despite being raised by Mennonites in rural America. Yet according to Alfred’s definition of Indigenous identity, he is not Indigenous.

Jeff Corntassel also provides a definition of contemporary Indigenous identity that proves more useful in the case of my acquaintance, which focuses predominantly on the fight against neocolonial oppression, in his article “Re-envisioning Resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination”. Indigenous people are “struggling to reclaim and regenerate [their] relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization” (Corntassel 88). This definition implicates that Indigenous identity is linked to overt political challenge, which is questionable, since not all people are politically minded. Yet the general sentiment of challenging colonization does include survivors of the Sixties Scoop and the residential school legacy.

Definitions of cultural identity must be general in order to include the multiplicity of experiences present among individuals in Indigenous communities across Canada; yet if a definition is too broad, it loses meaning. Establishing firm boundaries of Indigenous identity does not serve a purpose other than to further colonial motives, such as exclusions of some individuals seeking Status, as seen in section 1.3. For this reason we will pursue this thesis with a twofold definition: that Indigenous identity is related to resistance (as outlined by Corntassel) and connectedness to Indigenous communities and culture (Alfred’s definition).

Although Indigenous people comprise 4.3% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada), they are underrepresented in positions of leadership and politics. In the wake of 400 years of cultural genocide where the Canadian state has attempted to whitewash Indigenous culture, establishing an Indigenous form of leadership is difficult. Colonial rhetoric has infiltrated many, if not all, Indigenous nations, and internalized colonialism is manifest among many generations of Indigenous people, as discussed in section 1.1. Outside band councils and political bodies on reserves, there are relatively few Indigenous people in roles of leadership. Indigenous peoples are the fastest growing cultural group in Canada (Statistics Canada), and should be better represented in national politics. Aside from the obvious factors of marginalization and a history of institutional colonialism that discourage Indigenous individuals from obtaining leadership roles in the Canadian government, there are distinct differences in Western and Native political styles that potentially discourage cross-over.

Alfred looks at the relation between Indigenous identity and leadership in *Indigenous Manifesto*. With a focus on the benefit of all, the political ideas within a community must “make the journey from the mind of one person into the collective consciousness; and our peoples’ reality is communal” (Alfred *Manifesto* xvi). Indigenous politics very blatantly contrast occidental politics, by virtue of their emphasis on utilitarianism. Alfred argues that the current crises within Indigenous communities are linked to the type of political leadership within them, which is namely residual colonial leadership; should the form of politics be altered and aligned with Indigenous forms of politics, an emergence of Indigenous political leadership would occur (*Manifesto* 1). The crisis to which Alfred refers is likely a combination of domestic violence, substance

abuse, poverty, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). In order for recovery from this crisis to occur, a value system that includes traditional teachings rooted in community as a basis for government and politics must be established. These traditional teachings exist when “land, culture, and government are inseparable... each depends on the others, and this means that denial of one aspect precludes recovery for the whole” (Alfred *Manifesto* 2).

The ways in which land, culture and government interact are extremely complex, and according to Alfred, could only be balanced through an arduous process of decolonization. In an attempt to make sense of this process, I draw from another part of Alfred’s *Manifesto*, which uses Foucault’s theory on power to conceptualize Indigenous political obstacles. Foucault sees “the over-extension of state power within a constitutional framework not as abuse but as the ‘mere effect and continuation of a relation of domination’” that is fundamental to the ultimate power (quoted in Alfred *Manifesto* 48). Indeed, the power of the Canadian state is tremendous when compared to band governments and small grassroots Indigenous organizations. Negotiations between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples are constantly in a tug of war with regards to the constitutional framework, which has disproportionately harmed the latter group. Foucault’s analysis is useful because it highlights the fact that the struggle for Indigenous political autonomy is not a plight unique to Canada.

Many Indigenous groups other than Canadian Indigenous nations face obstacles of institutional discrimination and systematic marginalization, for example Aboriginals in Australia and many Indigenous communities across the Caribbean and South and Central America. Researching critical theory related to the plight of said groups could prove

useful for advancing the struggle against colonization and neoliberal discourses in Canada, a topic that could be helpful in future research. However, amalgamating all marginalized groups together is something that can prove dangerous, and could result in a minimization each group's bid for advancement, and further assumptions that all experiences of suffering are the same.

In an attempt to give merit to each marginalized group's plight, Emma LaRocque uses the term *voice* to address cultural agency and good scholarship (31). Voice refers to the relationship between power and knowledge, and the way in which individuals with means to disseminate their opinions' metaphorical voices are the loudest. Conversely, voice reveals cultural agency, because all speakers are implicated with a cultural framework. Edward Said explains that we cannot detach "the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society" (quoted in LaRocque 29). LaRocque makes clear that her voice is loaded with cultural implications, in the same way that all individuals are inexorably linked to their backgrounds, consciously or unconsciously. For this reason, non-native critics of Indigenous literature must proceed with caution, so as not to further perpetuate colonial agendas.

Arnold Krupat explores his role as a "non-Native" critical theorist of Indigenous literature in his book *Ethnocriticism*. He explains that although he does not have the right to speak "*for* the Indian, and [is] unable to speak *as* an Indian" (30), he considers discussion of "Indian" issues to be of the utmost significance. There are many ways to proceed with integrity, doing one's best to avoid such pitfalls as *domestic imperialism*, or

the unfortunate act of speaking “for” or “as” an Indigenous person, or by generalizing, stereotyping, or discriminating in any other manner (Krupat 30). Anyone who is meaningfully engaging with a culture other than his or her own will make biased observations. The goal of the “non-Native” critical theorist is to minimize the amount of bias one incorporates in one’s research. Critiquing a culture “turns *people* into cultural subjects (of inquiry, at the least), objects of its knowledge—so too, can there, in this absolute sense, be no nonviolent *criticism* of the discourse of Others, not even in ethnocriticism” (Krupat 6).

Despite the obvious danger of perpetuating domestic imperialism, issues of Indigenous resurgence are so necessary that they must be addressed, even by non-Native academics, to ensure their visibility in our society that could potentially veer towards homogeneity in institutional prejudice. Heterogeneity within academic schools of thought, or the analysis of critical issues from many perspectives, both Indigenous as well as non-Native, is essential. Krupat defines multiculturalism as “that particular organization of cultural studies which engages otherness and difference in such a way as to provoke an interrogation of and a challenge to what we ordinarily take as familiar and our own” (3). In other words, multiculturalism is necessary within any framework for it to be useful; when reading Indigenous literature, multicultural views are a method of promoting integrity.

Wendy Rose emphasizes the necessity for non-Native critics to strive for integrity while studying and writing about Indigenous culture and literature (*Travelling Knowledges* 44). The use of the word “integrity” implies subjectivity, which can be problematic in its ambiguity. Yet the solution lies in the acknowledgement of this

ambiguity. As non-Native critics, both Krupat and Eigenbrod celebrate heterogeneity within academic schools of thought, in reference to Native critics and “outsider” non-Native critics who proceed with respect of the culture they study.

Synonymous with integrity in research is *narrative scholarship*, an approach Eigenbrod uses when engaging in research about Indigenous cultures (*Travelling Knowledges* 3). An example of engaging in Native scholarship with integrity is alternating between storytelling and analysis, a method Eigenbrod utilizes in an attempt to avoid repeating the colonial discourse that she intends to expose (*Travelling Knowledges* 3). Reading Indigenous literature “is more a question of cultural initiation, of involvement and commitment, so that the culture and literature itself becomes more than a mere museum piece, dusty pages, something lifeless” (*Travelling Knowledges* 43). But involvement and commitment is difficult to achieve in Canada, as Eigenbrod points out: visiting a reserve is impossible as a non-Native under Section 30 of the *Indian Act*, since doing so is “trespassing” unless working as a teacher or researcher (*Travelling Knowledges* 43). Of course, many people travel through reserves as tourists and as guests visiting friends, but the fact that there is an institutional obstacle preventing cultural exchange is a testament to the institutional colonialism ever-present in our country. There are some recently established organizations, for example Canadian Roots, which organize exchanges between youth on reserves and in urban communities to encourage cultural exchanges, and hold great promise for swaying public ignorance of Native cultures. Over time, and with more such organizations, general cultural understanding will increase.

1.3 The Rise of Resurgence

This section maps the emergence of resurgence, a movement that is gaining momentum in opposition to the notion of reconciliation. There are many critical theorists who clearly outline the need for resurgence, one of whom is Jeff Corntassel. He recognizes contemporary decolonization movements, and clearly outlines some essential vocabulary used in rejecting reconciliation. The essence of his argument is that there are three major themes used by colonial entities to turn attempts at decolonization into a state of co-optation and assimilation: Rights, Reconciliation, and Resources; he coins these themes the “politics of distraction” (Corntassel 91). Rights, Reconciliation and Resources are indeed buzzwords that have been circulating amongst Canadian institutions and gaining momentum on a national level. As an alternative to the politics of distraction, Corntassel proposes an alternative: instead of Rights, he prefers *responsibilities*; rather than Reconciliation, *resurgence*; and to replace Resources, we should focus on *relationships* (Corntassel 91). This thesis focuses mainly on the relation between reconciliation and resurgence; yet responsibilities and relationships are also important.

Audra Simpson’s *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* is an excellent case study that can be used to investigate the politics of distraction, as outlined by Corntassel, in more detail. She proposes concrete ways to move forward from a past filled with colonial oppression, which predominantly features the rejection of reconciliation. A. Simpson makes three claims regarding the political stance of the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke, the reservation on which she was born : 1) that “sovereignty may exist within sovereignty”; 2) that “there is a political alterNative to ‘recognition,’ the

much sought-after and presumed ‘good’ of multicultural politics. This alterNative is ‘refusal’”; and 3) that “the way that we come to know the politics and culture of ‘Indigenous’ peoples requires an accounting that neither anthropology nor political science has done robustly” (10-11). I will now investigate each claim in more detail, while also illustrating how each corresponds to one element of the politics of distraction.

Responsibility, the first of Corntassel’s triad, can be illustrated by the political alignment of the Kahnawa’kehró:non (the residents of Kahnawà:ké). A. Simpson’s first claim refers to the state of belonging to the Mohawk nation within a Canadian or American geographical context. She uses the term *nested sovereignty* to explain this unique phenomenon, whereby “Indigenous sovereignties and Indigenous political orders prevail within and apart from settler governance” (A. Simpson 11). An example of non-native nested sovereignty is the province of Québec, where civil law is practiced, in contrast to the rest of Canada, where common law prevails. Like Québec, Kahnawà:ke exists within and apart from the surrounding more powerful governance.

Political membership to the nested sovereignty of Kahnawà:ke is manageable while within the borders of the community, but becomes problematic outside, where Kahnawa’kehró:non (the inhabitants of Kahnawà:ke) are not recognized as having an autonomous citizenship. The reason Kahnawa’kehró:non do not partake in Canadian politics is that their “right to determine the terms of legal belonging, a crucial component of sovereignty, has been dictated by a foreign government” (A. Simpson 10). The uneven power dynamic of the relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous people is once again the reason Kahnawa’kehró:non must assert their political autonomy.

The long-standing crisis of MMIW, in addition to the residential school legacy, has had a clear impact on the way Kahnawa'kehró:non deal with "the problem of *membership* and how they invoke their past relationships, both within the reserve and with the outside world" (A. Simpson 42-3, emphasis added). Membership is an important aspect of A. Simpson's work, as it has been an ongoing problem for Indigenous people in colonial Canada. The government is very meticulous regarding status and the benefits associated with it, which can have severe ramifications on society. For example, the introduction of Bill C-31 in 1985 was devastating to Indian women who married non-Indians (or non-status Indians). Such women then lost their own status, and consequently their access and membership to the community (A. Simpson 56). Descent, derived from ancestry, is a "contemporary embodiment of territorial history," as the example of bill C-31 so perfectly illustrates (A. Simpson 41). The criteria required for Indian status are still in question, both at social and political levels. Currently, Kahnawa'kehró:non refuse all institutional apparatus of the Canadian state and do not participate in any level of government that is not Iroquois; they view federal elections as "foreign political bodies that should have no authority or influence over Mohawk decision making" (A. Simpson 54). Members of many Indigenous groups, not only Kahnawa'kehró:non, do not partake in Canadian elections at any political level, preferring to deal directly with band government. They do not feel a sense of belonging to the Canadian state, favouring membership to first Nations and bands councils.

In her second claim, A. Simpson invokes refusal, which leads to what Corntassel refers to as *resurgence* in his triad. A. Simpson rejects the work that the TRC has undertaken to reconcile the atrocities afflicted unto Indigenous peoples by the Canadian

government. The basis of reconciliation is recognition, recognition of the atrocities that occurred in residential schools and as a lasting result of the trauma incurred in second and third generation survivors. She argues that contemporary undercurrents of lasting damage are not being addressed through reconciliation, and that the government's attempt to atone will result in their release from responsibility from lasting harms. Refusal to comply and amalgamate with the Canadian government is the only way to survive the deep fissures of colonial victimization, since "[t]he ongoing conditions of settler colonialism have forced Kahnawa'kehró:non to take an offensive position not just against the settler nation, but in some ways against themselves" (A. Simpson 12). "Against themselves" is in reference to internalized colonialism, which often manifests in a plethora of mental health and substance abuse problems. A. Simpson recommends "calculated refusals of the 'gifts' [(reconciliation)] of the state, and vexed determinations of 'membership' and belonging in that state" (12).

The third claim concerns disciplines used to approach Indigenous issues, which can inadvertently perpetuate colonial agendas. This is an illustration of *relationships*, in that we must reflect on the history of the theoretical tools we use to understand complex Indigenous issues. Since the disciplines of political science and anthropology have been traditionally used to deal with Indigenous issues in a predominantly colonial context, A. Simpson argues that a critical approach to Indigenous politics requires a new discipline (A. Simpson 11). As opposed to the fields of anthropology and political science, critical theory and studies in literature do not have a history of accounting for Indigenous culture in a racist fashion, and therefore hold promise for advancement of resurgence against the current crisis. Indeed, the state of crisis among Indigenous peoples has been ongoing

since colonialism began, but only recently has political activism resulted in increasing recognition.

Glen Coulthard also addresses the shortcomings of reconciliation. He deconstructs the colonial motive behind it, explaining that in the past four decades, there has been much political and academic debate regarding the *recognition* of Indigenous peoples and their rights to land and self-government. In an attempt for the liberal self-recognition based approach to Indigenous self-determination in Canada, Indigenous people have reproduced the “very forms of colonial power which [their] original demands for recognition sought to transcend” (Coulthard 24). Ironically, this act of seeking to attain settler-state recognition of Indigenous rights has in fact resulted in the opposite: “the continued dispossession of [Indigenous] homelands and the ongoing usurpation of [Indigenous] self-determining authority” (Coulthard 24). These discussions have focused on a “perceived relationship between the affirmative recognition and institutional accommodation of societal cultural differences on the one hand, and the freedom and autonomy of marginalized individuals and groups living in ethnically diverse states on the other” (Coulthard 3). Recognition is a political tool that is non-binding, and therefore of little consequence. Although it is the first step to a peaceful and symbiotic relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous people, it is not the key to *transforming* colonial relationships between said parties. Indeed, a transformation is what is required considering Indigenous crises within Canada.

The Canadian government seeks *reconciliation*, or political appeasement between itself and Indigenous peoples, as already mentioned with regards to A. Simpson’s work. According to Coulthard, doing so is a way for the government to avoid any dialogue on

contemporary settler/colonial relations, so as to rid itself of any associated responsibility for the lasting harms done to Indigenous people as a result of residential school trauma. Coulthard suggests that Indigenous peoples redirect their struggles away from “a politics that seeks to attain a conciliatory form of settler-state recognition for Indigenous nations” in favour of a “*resurgent politics of recognition*” (24). Resurgence, as opposed to reconciliation, is based in self-actualization, direct action, and cultural practices that are “attentive to the subjective and structural composition of settler-colonial power” (Coulthard 24). Coulthard is therefore in favour of a politics of resurgence, and considers reconciliation a futile pursuit.

Resurgence is the main theme in Leanne Simpson’s *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*. L. Simpson’s understanding of resurgence was contextualized by Taiaiake Alfred’s *Indigenous Manifesto*, in that it “challenge[s] us to reclaim the *Indigenous* contexts (knowledge, interpretations, values, ethics, processes) for our political cultures” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 17). Simpson’s interpretation of resurgence is therefore a type of political self-recognition that stems from using Indigenous processes to improve settler/colonial relations, rather than western ones. This is because according to Indigenous traditions, “the processes of engagement highly influence the outcomes of the engagement itself” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 17). Therefore, in order to achieve Indigenous representation in the interface with the Canadian state, the process of engagement must be rooted in Indigenous thought.

This incorporation of Native thought in political action is what L. Simpson refers to as resurgence. Resurgence is the way in which the relationship between the Canadian

state and Indigenous peoples will be peaceful and symbiotic in the future. She outlines criteria to illustrate the path Indigenous people must take to achieve resurgence:

[W]e need to not just figure out who we are; we need to re-establish the process by which we live who we are within the current context we find ourselves. We do not need funding to do this. We do not need opportunity to do this. We need our Elders, our languages, and our lands, along with vision, intent, commitment, community and ultimately, action. We must move ourselves beyond resistance and survival, to flourishing (L. Simpson *Dancing* 17).

“Flourishment” refers to autonomous control of land, self-government, and cultural expression for Indigenous people. L. Simpson’s criteria are by no means concrete, but they exemplify the type of Indigenous approach that is required for resurgence to occur successfully, as outlined by Taiaiake Alfred. Indeed, L. Simpson argues that at the very least, upholding her criteria will “ground [Indigenous] people in their own cultures and teachings that provide the ultimate antidote to colonialism, which [Simpson] believe[s] is what Indigenous intellectuals and theorists have been encouraging [Indigenous people] to do all along” (*Dancing* 17).

The connection to community, culture and land as described by L. Simpson is precisely what Tol Foster promotes in his article “Of One Blood.” Although he uses a different nomenclature, Foster endorses a very similar political practice, which he coins *relational regionalism*. This may be understood as the use of Indigenous frameworks to critique Indigenous issues, using a proximity-based approach. Rather than importing foreign theory into Indigenous communities, a more rigorous understanding of Indigenous issues is achieved by “valuing *and critiquing* the historical and cultural archive as a theoretically sophisticated site of its own” (Foster 267). He emphasizes the benefits of using one’s personal history to achieve objective frameworks with which to critique the relationships between individuals, institutions, and historical outcomes

(Foster 267). Using this approach of relational regionalism, proponents of Indigenous issues can “utilize the counternarratives of their communities as a theoretical base from which to conduct anticolonialist and cosmopolitan critique” (Foster 267).

Dian Million addresses ways in which Indigenous value systems may be integrated into politics in her work *Therapeutic Nations*. In an age where neoliberalism is the primary hegemonic discourse, with “pervasive effects on ways of thought and political-economic practices... it is now part of the commonsense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world” (Million 17). In effect, neoliberal agendas are synonymous with colonial politics, which favor the capitalist advancement of an elite group through the exploitation and marginalization of another, less advantaged group. Yet whereas Alfred’s work is predominantly a call to action for Indigenous rights (as the title *Indigenous Manifesto* implies), Million’s work offers a more structured approach to empowering Indigenous politics. She makes a connection between Indigenous politics and academia, arguing that both hold power and sway over the future of Indigenous communities. She proposes a way in which to incorporate Indigenous value systems into academia as well as politics to counter colonial politics: *felt theory*.

Although Million, like Foster, uses different nomenclature, the essence of her theory is similar to L. Simpson’s resurgence. Felt theory is rooted in community knowledge, which Million argues is integral for informing the position of Indigenous scholars (Million 57). As Alfred explained in his definition of “Indigenous”, Million argues that an essential part of being Native is the experience of interacting with and living among Native people; this is at the core of felt theory. Million’s predominant

argument is that in order for one to incorporate Native teachings in their political work, they must have felt the common Native experience themselves.

Million's Felt Theory is an excellent way to deal with knowledge and power within Indigenous frameworks and societies, but she identifies that when Indigenous paradigms meet occidental ones, problems develop when ideas and methods aren't transferrable. She argues that in order to share one's lived experiences with non-Natives, one must be empowered enough to trust that words will be heard through an objective and non-racist lens.

The mainstream white society reads Native stories through thick pathology narratives. Yet it is these same stories that collectively witnessed the social violence that was and is colonialism's heart... To 'tell' called for a reevaluation of reservation and reserve beliefs about what was appropriate to say about your own family, your community (Million 59).

Stories are a major rhetorical form within Indigenous communities (Million 59). The communal nature of Indigenous politics, to which Alfred attests, is intrinsic to stories, a form through which one reveals their personal experiences and relates that knowledge to make decisions. Stories are therefore a means for expression within many Indigenous paradigms. Stories are a central aspect of resurgence, as is affirmed in Chapter Three. It is interesting to consider, however, what happens to that rhetorical framework outside of Indigenous paradigms.

By sharing stories, one exposes oneself, not just one's ideas. Many stories are therefore sacred, for example those told within a sweat lodge may not be retold. Million discusses Ruby Slipperjack's experience as an "Ojibwe child caught in circumstances that she and [her community] do not analyze or position to the seemingly obvious 'truths' that western academics might think they readily 'see'" (Million 65). Articulating

experiences of domestic violence rooted in residential school trauma is difficult when outsiders to that Native community have never felt or known those who have experienced such trauma, and as a result, cannot fully comprehend it. Million explains that whenever Native literature articulates any anger, the Canadian literary establishment tends to see that literature as “polemic,” and said authors are branded “bitter” and “biased” because they do not understand the anger (Million 66).

Although felt theory is effective for the purposes of political leadership and academia, there are limitations to it. First of all, felt theory does not align with the “objective” western paradigm, where fact takes priority over feeling, especially in academia. Although this alone is not problematic, interchanges between the two paradigms are. The academic institution in Canada “repeatedly produces gatekeepers to our entry into important social discourses because we seek to present our histories as affective, *felt*, intuited as well as thought” (Million 57). Felt theory is based in experience, not in words, yet words are the currency of hegemonic politics. Much of the pain regarding the past 400 years of colonialism in Canada has been expressed in a “war of words,” where western colonizers had the upper hand (Million 67). This war is referred to by LaRocque in section 1.1, and confirms the complex nature of language. Million explains that Indigenous people are currently “‘pressed to explain, to debunk, and to dismantle. To the war of ways against us, we are moved to retrieve, redefine, and reconcile our scattered pieces. To the voices of despair among us and in us, we are challenged to dream new visions to bring hope for the future’” (Million 67).

The second limitation to felt theory is the fact that it must be distinguished not only from the hegemonic colonial narrative, but also from white feminism, to which it is

commonly assimilated. Felt scholarship “continues to be segregated as a ‘feminine’ experience or as polemic, or at worst, not as knowledge at all” (Million 57). Yet Million points out that this amalgamation is undesirable: “First nations women in Canada often distanced themselves from white feminism, choosing strategies and language that located them within the heart of their own experiences” (58). Million argues that the struggle of Native women cannot be buried under the discourse on white feminism, gender, and sexual abuse (58). Although the white feminist movement successfully “politicized the ‘private,’ showing it to be a wholly political space, providing discursive models for ‘telling,’” the colonial aspect to felt theory distinguishes it from white feminism (Million 61).

Inspired by resurgence, Corntassel proposes a *peoplehood model*, as outlined earlier in this section. It espouses:

...daily acts of renewal, whether through prayer, speaking your language, honoring your ancestors, etc., are the foundations of resurgence. It is through this renewal process that commitments are made to reclaim and restore cultural practices that have been neglected and/or disrupted (Corntassel 89).

Corntassel’s arguments regarding the importance of the expression of contemporary Indigenous culture are very similar to L. Simpson’s resurgence, and therefore qualify as synonymous.

Emma LaRoque’s *dialogics of the oppressed* constitutes “a significant logic of resistance and an array of contestatory practices” (LaRoque 23). This is again synonymous with a politics of resurgence, or the emphasis on expressing Indigenous culture in daily life. Indeed, LaRoque argues that every Indigenous artist producing works with Indigenous content, regardless of the degree of political implications, is a producer of “resistance material” (LaRoque 23). Resistance themes include “the re-

establishing of Native cultures and the challenging of historical and cultural records... [also exposing] destructive government policies and social injustices” (LaRoque 26). Even children’s stories and legends are “forms of resistance as they too represent contemporary efforts to re-establish the validity of Aboriginal aesthetics and formats” (LaRoque 26). It is therefore unclear as to which expressions of Indigenous cultures constitute resurgence, according to LaRocque. This theme is explored in more depth in Chapter Three.

Monture illustrates the discussion of resurgence in every-day acts of Indigenous cultural expression in *We Share Our Matters. Two Centuries of Writing and Resistance at Six Nations of the Grand River*. He introduces the idea that divergent opinions on political matters often arrive at the same destinations (180). For example, there have been multiple theories referenced in this section that are all synonymous with resurgence. Essentially, Indigenous people “keep the thinking and the dialogue alive, in whatever form, and do not lose sight of the unique connections between [their] histories, traditions, and communities as the sites of [their] cultural continuity”, all living examples of resurgence (Monture 180).

In conclusion, the emergence of resurgence, and synonymous concepts such as the dialogics of the oppressed and a peoplehood model, are all articulated by contemporary critical theorists in response to the Canadian State’s attempt at reconciliation, and are synonymous. L. Simpson likens reconciliation to a domestic violence partnership, paralleling the abusive husband to the Canadian state, and the abused wife to Indigenous people (*Dancing* 21). The current attempts by the state to reconcile are synonymous with an abusive husband being told to apologize, and the wife to accept his apology to

continue living in the abusive relationship. L. Simpson therefore sees reconciliation as institutionalized, asymmetrical, and an attempt to neutralize the legitimacy of Indigenous resistance (*Dancing* 22). Cultural regeneration and political resurgence are the necessary components to availing contemporary settler-colonial conflicts (L. Simpson *Dancing* 22). She therefore remains skeptical of reconciliation, seeing the State's intention as an attempt to neutralize Indigenous resistance. Again, as outlined at the beginning of the chapter, it is important to acknowledge that this thesis is written in a language that holds layers of complexities regarding colonization, but equally important to recognize that English may be regarded as a language of empowerment and decolonization, a goal this thesis seeks to further.

CHAPTER 2 : ORALITY

The first chapter established the framework with which to critique the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine, focusing on the definition and importance of resurgence. This chapter begins to analyse the presence of resurgence in the three poets' work, an analysis that is continued in the third chapter. Orality is most present in communities that do not have a literary tradition, for example Indigenous nations predating colonization, as well as European cities prior to the medieval ages. This chapter investigates how orality is manifested in the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine. In Indigenous paradigms, time is conceived in cycles rather than linearly (as it is in Western notions), and cyclicism is one of the major aspects of orality. Examples of cyclical time are identifiable in the poetry of all three authors through references to cycles in nature, for example in migrations, seasons and the celestial bodies that reappear at different times of the year. Fragmentation and narrative style that directly addresses the reader also implies orality. The final section establishes that incorporating orality into print can be classified as a remediation. The section then explores how thought and print are remediations of dreaming, according to many Indigenous cultures, and how dreaming is present in the three author's poetry as further affirmations of Indigenous culture.

2.1 Forms of Poetry

Before engaging in discussions of orality and oral poetry, it is necessary to briefly touch upon poetry. Whereas prose presents logical and linear sequences of thought with strict grammatical frameworks, poetry is less structurally limited. It can be a unique vessel for the creative expression of thought, and succeed at evoking substantial pathos and igniting the imagination. Poetry as a genre eludes definition; such unsatisfactory mainstream attempts as “prose with poetic qualities” (Poetry *dictionary*) and “literary work[s] in which the expression of feelings and ideas is given intensity by the use of distinctive style and rhythm” (Poetry *oxford*) do not encapsulate the complexities of poetry. Lillian Allen, a Torontonain poet, academic and dub artist, provides a more vivid representation of the genre in the following quotation:

[Poetry is] a kind of reaching out, of connecting, of reaching inside and touching. It’s a reaching for words, for space, for breath, for a pause. It’s the breath of our humanity. The poetic line glides, skips, is stubborn sometimes, it shouts, dances, whispers. And asserts itself as beings do in the world. We know that words are not just words as our voice is not just lines on paper. And text is mostly about the subtext (293).

In order to process our dynamic and changing existence, poetry is rife with layers of subtext, implications, and metaphor. With beautiful balance, Allen chooses to express herself in a way that is thoroughly poetic (for example personifying the poetic line that “glides and skips”), thus paralleling her form with her content. It is not surprising that she has a background in Dub poetry (a type of poetic performance), because her sentences sound as though they are being spoken aloud. Since this chapter focuses on orality in poetry, it is fitting to commence with a quote about poetry in which orality is present. In this chapter, orality and remediation are explored as concepts, and in the poetry of Bacon,

Bordeleau and Fontaine. The manifestation of orality in these works is an expression of Indigenous culture and resurgence, which is expanded upon in Chapter Three.

When poetry is read aloud, it is transformed from print to orality, changing medium. This is known as oral poetry, since it is necessarily read aloud. Yet poetry that holds traces of orality is more complicated to define, since tracing orality is not a straightforward process. There are clues that orality is present, but they are only indicative, not conclusive. This section looks at studies on orality and oral poetry, and explores them from cultural and academic frameworks.

Leanne Simpson is an advocate of storytelling, favouring its incorporation of poetry and orality. In addition, the performer must work with the emergence and flux of reactions by the audience that is unique to each performance, especially considering the cultural space in which that performance occurs (*Dancing* 34). The reception of information from the audience provides the speaker:

... with information s/he uses to decide what to tell and how to tell it to gain both individual meaning and collective resonance. The relationship between those present becomes dynamic, with the storyteller adjusting their ‘performance’ based on the reactions and presence of the audience (L. Simpson *Dancing* 34).

As a result of the contributions of all present at the performance, including the performers and audience, that experience is wholly unique, a collective experience, which L. Simpson identifies as having “the goal of lifting the burden of colonialism by visioning new realities” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 34). This collaborative experience, therefore, provides the space for political visioning, something that she considers more effective than through mediated print.

Orality is an integral aspect of Indigenous poetry. Before investigating its presence in the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fonatine, it is necessary to define it. Paul Zumthor

defines orality quite simply as “un type de communication opérée par voie buccale et sonore” (Zumthor 169). Orality as a practice is universal; every society communicates, at least in part, using orality. Although it has no precise boundaries, it encapsulates the communication between societies that favour oral traditions, including Indigenous cultures, and European civilizations that pre-date mass literacy. Auditors, in relation to their sets of beliefs and social constructs, interpret sounds articulated by speakers in a culturally specific way. This makes sense when we consider that the English spoken by people from rural Nunavut would be likely misinterpreted by someone from southern urban Canada. This is in part due to the difference in vocabulary and pronunciation, but also the fact that the two hypothetical individuals live in communities with very different sets of beliefs. Therefore, orality is based on the premise that all individuals receive the meaning of sounds differently. The emphasis is therefore placed on the way in which sounds are received, and less so on their production.

It is important to acknowledge that orality features more prominently in some cultures than in others, and in Canadian Indigenous groups, orality is a pinnacle of cultural communication. During colonization, orality in Indigenous languages served as a code to prevent knowledge being shared with European colonizers. “Information that was kept in people’s heads was not available to Europeans, could not be changed and molded into pictures of ‘savagery’ and ‘paganism’” (LaRocque 20). During the early phases of the colonial era, Europeans looked for proof of “paganism” to justify their conquest of the land. LaRocque points out that Indigenous peoples’ tendency toward orality allowed expression of cultural identity that could not be ridiculed on paper. Orality was

interwoven into Indigenous cultures and language, and according to LaRocque, all three are used as resistance:

Clearly, it is not by accident that I grew up so close to my language, a language that remains closest to my soul, and just as clearly I have my parents to thank for their insightful resistance, a resistance I did not fully appreciate until I began to understand that language is the epistemological basis of culture (LaRocque 20).

If language is the foundation for culture and resistance, and orality is part of both language and culture, then it follows that orality is necessary for Indigenous resistance.

Like orality, *oral poetry* is a label that is often utilized in the study of Indigenous poetry, since it is so frequently performed. Although it is easy to identify oral poetry if it is being performed, the method for classifying it in its published form is more difficult. Zumthor proposes that oral poetry is a medium of transmission whereby the content is communicated through language, as well as other means: “un message ne se réduit pas à son contenu manifeste, mais comporte un autre contenu, latent, tenant à la nature du moyen de communication utilisé” (170). The “latent” aspect to which he refers is similar to the “extra” stuff to which Allen alluded in the opening of this chapter with regards to poetry (not just oral poetry). This is problematic, because the two definitions for poetry and oral poetry are similar, making it impossible to distinguish one from the other. To shed light on the issue, consider the following published passage by Bacon, which is part of a section she has performed on multiple occasions as “oral poetry”.

Dessine-moi l'arbre
que tu es
Dessine-moi la rivière
que tu as racontée
Dessine-moi le vent
qui t'a fait voyager
Dessine-moi le feu
qui brûle en nous (108)

Bacon makes abstract requests, for example “draw me the wind that inspired your travels”. Not only is drawing wind impossible, but questioning the emotions that motivate us to travel is a psychological investigation that requires deep critical analysis of the self. When performing this passage, qualifying it as oral poetry, Bacon could make meaningful eye contact with her audience, rendering the requests more personal rather than general. In its printed form, there are certainly aspects that imply it would do well in performance, for example the use of commands. Rhetorical questions and implied dialogue with the audience (for example the use of questions), implies an incorporation of orality into the printed poem, but does not necessarily classify a poem as oral poetry.

The second aspect of oral poetry according to Zumthor is that it be culturally involved. He considers oral poetry to have cultural associations: “[l]es voix humaines forment ainsi, dans l’existence du groupe, un bruit de fond, une stimulation sonore qui, dans certains cas, prend une acuité plus grande, car elle fait appel aux formes profondes de *l’imagination collective*” (Zumthor 169, emphasis added). In the same way that two individuals could not have the same dream, a large group of people could not have a “collective imagination” without the heavy influence of societal constructs. The collective imagination implies the transmission of knowledge that already constitutes part of the preconceived notions of that society.

However, when analysing Indigenous poetry, whether it is oral or not, much of it is culturally involved. For example, the poetry of Fontaine draws from a heritage of collective imagination made possible through the transmission of oral knowledge; yet the following example was not written as “oral poetry”:

Je serai un pays à moi seule
j’aurai des enfants avec un père invisible le ciel

le tonnerre
j'atteindrai
la profondeur du vertige (Fontaine 63).

Fontaine threatens to metaphorically become her own country, procreating with the sky and thunder. These metaphorical desires are an attempt to recreate a culture that is under threat of disappearance. The fragmentation could imply that these verses are meant to be spoken, but they were written with the intention of publication. Orality certainly features, but this is not an oral poem. Therefore, it is impossible to identify oral poetry in its printed form, since the factors that identify it are not exclusive to it.

2.2 Cyclicism and Fragmentation

Orality is present in the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine; the three factors that demonstrate this claim are cyclicism, fragmentation and narrative style. The first concept, cyclicism, is that time occurs in cycles, and that a society is heavily implicated in that model of time. Cyclicism manifests itself in poetry through the repetition of phrases, and allusions to cycles in nature. Whereas occidental concepts of time and thought are linear, Indigenous communities operate in cyclic model, using non-linear modes of thought (Battiste). Paul Zumthor, a specialist in orality, confirms this distinction between Indigenous and Western thought:

Dans une civilisation de l'oralité, l'homme reste branché directement sur les cycles naturels; sa conception du temps est circulaire (tout revient toujours); les comportements sont étroitement régis par les normes collectives; il règne une confuse nostalgie du nomadisme originel. Inversement, un monde de l'écriture disjoint la pensée et l'action, le langage perd de sa force créatrice propre, une conception linéaire du temps triomphe, ainsi que l'individualisme et le rationalisme (170).

Circular and linear models of time distinguish societies. Yet for Canadian Indigenous communities that now incorporate models of linearity as a result of modern times, that utilize a mix of written and oral traditions, it is interesting to question whether all of Zumthor's theory is still applicable. Zumthor associates the Western culture with the 'written world,' or the linear method of thought that characterizes the occidental world. Indigenous communities that find themselves between traditional roots and colonization are no longer founded uniquely in orality, but are influenced by globalization. Policies on Indigenous reserves are communicated using the written word as well as orality, so Zumthor's claim that Indigenous communities utilize entirely cyclical models is no longer true. Nevertheless, cyclicism and orality do still feature heavily in Indigenous culture. Consequently, the presence of cyclicism acts as a factor to identify the presence of orality in Indigenous literature.

The interface of these two models of time and thought are irrefutably demonstrated in Bacon's work. Her poetry presents linearly, since it is published as a book, an undeniably occidental form. Yet her verse invokes cyclicism in two ways: through repetition, and through references to Nature's cycles. For example, she will temporally situate events in relation to the cycle of the moon:

Un soir de pleine lune,
la mère de tant d'enfants
redonne espoir
à un enfant (Bacon 40).

Such examples as this are plentiful throughout the work, in reference to cycles of celestial bodies (Bacon 10, 12, 58, 60, 90, 110, 116), as well as the seasons, migrations and other

cycles of nature: “[T]on Coeur bat au rythme / des battements d’ailes de l’aigle” (Bacon 108).

The second aspect of cyclicism is repetition. Repetition of a theme or phrase is a subject that Havelock and Hershbelle explore in their book *Communication Arts in the Ancient World*. They affirm that such repetition is characteristic of orality, and is not nearly as prevalent in written work (Havelock and Hershbelle 7). They investigate a number of works by Homer, as well as the Epic of Gilgamesh, texts that were adapted from oral storytellers or bards. In their research, they measured the ratio of repeated words to non-repeated words, and compare those ratios to some control texts that were not adapted from bards, and therefore do not originate with orality. They conclude that repetition is more common in texts based in orality. This finding is true when considering the works of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine.

Repetition manifests itself on nearly every page of Bacon’s work. In the poem “Fils de guerrier”, the first, second, fourth and fifth stanzas open with the following two verses : “Moi, fils de louve / moi fils de guerrier” (Bacon 120-121). Another example can be seen in the following stanza:

Tue-moi
si je manque de respect à ma terre
Tue-moi
si je manque de respect à mes animaux
Tue-moi
si je reste silencieuse
quand on manqué de respect
à mon peuple (Bacon 84).

Through the repetition of opening phrases or words, Bacon revisits themes, coming full-circle in her poetry. This parallels the cyclicism of allusions to nature, rendering her

publication *Bâtons à message Tshissinuatshitakana* a marriage of cyclical and linear modes of time.

Likewise, Fontaine's poetry employs plentiful allusions to nature and repetition of phrases. In the poem "Chant à Papakissik^u", the phrase "Je vibre caribou" is used to open two stanzas, and the phrase "Je suis la femme qui tombe du ciel" opens three stanzas (Fontaine 76, 79). Fontaine not only embodies caribou, but "vibrates" it, implying that her essence has merged with that of the caribou. She then describes herself as the woman who fell from the sky, an allusion to the beginning of the creation story of planet earth. These references demonstrate not only her sense of deep connection to the natural world, but also cyclicism. Following is another example of repetition, a theme that is very common in *Manifeste Assi*:

L'exil
habite ici
Il croise les murs
de temps à autre, il arrive
Je ne le force pas à entrer
il ne me force pas à entrer
Parfois je l'attends
parfois je le sors
parfois je l'entends
parfois je l'épouse (Fontaine 73).

The theme of this extract is exile, a theme created in the wake of colonialism and the contemporary marginalization of Indigenous people in Canada. Fontaine repeats "force pas à entrer" twice and "parfois je..." four times. These repetitions emphasize the feeling that Fontaine is dancing with exile in a circle, revisiting the same feelings over and over again.

Finally, Bordeleau also exemplifies repetition and natural references, which contribute to the presence of cyclicism. For example, in the opening four pages of *De*

rouge et de blanc, the phrase “je suis” is repeated twenty-two times. Rather than an attempt to define herself in one category, Bordeleau uses this repetition to explain that she is not defined in one single attribute, but that she is from a multitude of collective experiences in relation to Indigenous culture, and in relation to the natural world: “Je suis de légendes / dont les dieux étaient des ours” (Bordeleau 13). The following stanza also illustrates this sense of belonging to many experiences:

Je suis le choc de deux cultures,
la blanche de béton et de fer,
la rouge de plumes, de fourrures
et de cuir tanné à l’odeur âcre
du bois qui fume (Bordeleau 11).

Her eloquent style beautifully articulates her sense of exposure to two cultures, the “cement and iron” representing the occidental colonial culture, and the “feathers, fur and tanned leather” her Indigenous roots. This passage is one of many in the opening pages that begins with “Je suis”, each stanza outlining a different aspect of who Bordeleau is. The repetition of the opening phrases gives a sense of cyclicism to these stanzas, since the beginning of each is the same.

This section has thus far outlined the relationship between repetition of phrases in poetry and cyclicism, and will now consider repetition in a broader sense: the repetition of performance. Although Indigenous stories were repeatedly shared amongst communities, each storyteller tweaked their version rendering each performance unique. Zumthor claims that orality possesses a “réalité matérielle” that is not present in the written word (171); that « [l]a voix y est liée à des images de force primordiale, d’énergie et de volonté de sortir de soi » (172). This energy and desire to escape oneself can be transmitted through writing, but a voice trembling with anger can more efficiently convey

emotion than any combination of words. For example, the voice of Joséphine Bacon is lost in the publication of her verses. Using Zumthor's theory, one explanation for the superiority of Bacon's live performance (relative to her published poetry) is the fact that a published work can be repeated. He argues that the ability to re-read a published work detracts from its ability to evoke pathos from the auditor :

C'est sur ces valeurs que se fonde implicitement l'esthétique de toute poésie orale, ainsi... que celle de formes connexes, tel le conte traditionnel : le langage émane d'une voix, et celle-ci d'un corps agissant dans un espace concret; en conséquence, 'l'œuvre' est unique, car elle n'a d'existence réelle qu'une seule fois... répétée, elle n'est plus identiquement la même (Zumthor 173).

The element of beauty that distinguishes a poem delivered orally is that it is a one-time experience that can never be re-lived. Those who witness an oral performance will never be able to accurately reproduce it, which renders each delivery of that same performance unique.

Reading the verses of Joséphine Bacon is incomparable to hearing her recite them. Her elders imparted a great knowledge of orality during her childhood in the Innu community of Pessamit. This base of orality is evident in her rich poetry, originally written in nutshimit and then translated into French. There is a striking phenomenon, whereby oral poetry has the rhetorical ability to provoke pathos and reveal beauty to the auditor that is inaccessible to a reader of the same words in silence. In the same way that works of drama are intended to be performed, I argue that Indigenous poetry is meant to be read aloud. Bacon's poem "Hace Mess" is published in the collection *Les bruits du monde*, an audio publication available for sale on DVD and available online on YouTube, a video-sharing website. YouTube is distant from the tradition of storytelling around a fire, or in a shelter with members of a family or village. Although the written verses of

“Hace Mess” are touching, it is by hearing Bacon deliver the lines herself that the auditor is most deeply engaged. The poem describes annual events in a cyclic nature: « J’avais sept ans, un homme m’a violée / À huit ans, mon père me versait du brandy / À neuf ans, mes parents étaient gentils / À dix ans, j’ai appris à voler à la coop... » and so on and so forth through the years of Bacon’s adolescence, until she finally reaches out for help at the culmination of her poem (Hace Mass, youtube). YouTube videos can be viewed, and, more importantly, heard repeatedly, yet they relay a message between the speaker and the auditor in only one direction. Listening to Bacon deliver her poetry through a video is much more interesting than reading her work in a library, yet a superior method would be to see and listen to her live performance so that there might be the exchange between poet and audience to which L. Simpson referred. The distinction is therefore twofold: through the mediatization of the recording (the internet video), the auditor cannot respond to Bacon; secondly, this lack of communication means that Bacon is not necessarily aware of the responses to her work, just as she is unaware of the responses to her written work. In this way, the act of watching a YouTube video, as well as reading a published version of Bacon’s work negates the communication between performer and auditor that occurs during live performance.

According to Zumthor, there are five distinct phases to all works of poetry, of varying length: production, transmission, primary reception, conservation, and finally the subsequent receptions (182). By watching “Hace Mess” on YouTube, the viewer/auditor is not participating in the primary reception, or its conservation, but rather the subsequent receptions. Apart from the primary phase, to which the artist alone has access, viewers of the video are lacking the other phases of the experience that original auditors might have.

Yet if we were to attempt primary reception, the third phase, we would transform Bacon's words with our personal nuances and cultural constructions.

Le même texte, dit ou chanté dans d'autres circonstances, par un autre interprète, ne sera pas tout à fait le même texte : ce qui diffère entre ces deux performances se définirait principalement en termes de perception et d'émotion, c'est-à-dire par rapport à ce qu'a de plus personnel la réception de l'œuvre (Zumthor 186).

Poetry delivered orally is a unique experience, just as no performance can be repeated exactly. If a text is read aloud by another performer, as Zumthor explains in this quote, the experience is different.

The next question that arises is whether the slight alterations that inevitably occur through public oral readings of Bacon's poetry (each "performing" the poem differently) affect the message Bacon intended to transmit, or whether this slight variance is a part of the art form. Once her message has been recorded in print, a unique experience is no longer achievable. Yet, by publishing her work, Bacon resigns herself to this difference between experiences, and perhaps the loss of uniqueness for each reading is not a bad thing. The repetition achieved through re-watching a YouTube video of her delivery, or through re-reading her poetry, although slightly different each time, is something she had considered and deemed worthwhile in transmitting her message.

The second clue to detecting orality is through fragmentation. Conversations are formed of fragments, whereas prose requires that a writer use complete sentences. Poetry is often composed of fragments, and in some cases, this is evidence that orality has influenced the writing. Another way that fragmentation incorporates orality is through the writing process. Laure Morali, Joséphine Bacon's editor, describes the fragmented way in which Bacon submits her poetry:

‘Je suis devenue poète par hasard,’ dit [Bacon] pourtant avec humilité, ‘j’écris sur les coins de table.’ C’est vrai qu’elle écrit sur tout ce qui lui tombe sous la main—enveloppes, menus de restaurant, sous-verres, paquets de cigarettes, feuilles de bingo perdantes, serviettes en papier—et comme elle a peur de les égarer, elle me les confie (Bacon 136).

Bacon’s published poems, originally written on any substance available and assembled in a way so as to impose a certain reading sequence, are contrary to the spirit in which they were originally composed. She inevitably approved the final linear format of her book, but it is worthwhile to note that the original sequence was not linear. Also, it is likely that Bacon’s fragmented writing method is influenced by the orality present in her native culture. Had she sat in front of a typewriter and written poetry in a linear fashion, the product would have been entirely different.

Fragments are the intermediary phase of all thoughts, transitory between intellect and publication. Goethe describes how the thoughts that actually reach publication are but a fragment of all the thoughts that have been pondered. “[Literature] is but the fragment of fragments, the least of what had happened and of what had been spoken was written down; of what had been written down, only the smallest fraction was preserved” (cited in Kittler 36). Very little of what happens in the world is recorded and published. For example, when we read Indigenous poetry about resurgence, we read but a small sample of all the thoughts that transpired around that subject. The result is that we are missing some of the wealth of thought that was never printed, and orality may capture additional valuable thoughts. Again, the process of this fragmentation parallels the way Bacon writes, since as a reader, it is unclear what percentage of the poems she wrote on the fragments of paper were handed to Morali (her editor), and subsequently published.

In contrast to Goethe, Tim Ingold considers the act of writing to be unrelated to collective imagination and thoughts, rather an individual creation process. While discussing the evolution of the written word, he explains that the modern writer is a master of all they survey, one who:

...confronts the blank surface of the earth, [like] the urban planner confronts a wasteland, in preparation for the superimposition upon it of a construction of his own making. Just as a society is created in the space of colonial rule, or a city erected in the space encompassed by the plan, so the written text is produced in the space of the page (Ingold 12-13).

The notion that one encounters a wasteland while writing implies that publishing builds knowledge where there was none before. Writers and artists like to believe that they are articulating original ideas and thought, whereas Goethe implied that all thoughts are recycled. Yet Ingold believes that the writer is the creator. “Thus the text is an artefact—a thing fabricated or made—that is built where before there was nothing (or, if anything was there beforehand, it is eradicated in the process)” (Ingold 13). The conceptualization that text should conquer what “before... was nothing” implies that alternatives to print, for example orality, are inferior and unworthy of documentation.

Ingold makes another point with regards to the journals of Christopher Columbus, comparing writing in an empty journal to sailing uncharted waters. ““This lack of precedents, the fiction of a blank page, enables the writer and the mariner, as in the case of Columbus, to claim ownership of both text and territory”” (José Rabasa, quoted in Ingold 13). In this quote Ingold draws a very strong parallel between writing and colonialism, ironically using Columbus (a national symbol of colonialism) as the example for the metaphor of writing. Ingold’s scholarship is individualistic, which highlights the

difference between his approach and that of Indigenous writers, who often incorporate creation stories and collective thought.

Another aspect of fragmentation is that readers only read certain parts of a text, creating a second tier of fragmentation that reaches readers/auditors. Until 16th century Europe, texts were most often read aloud to a group of listeners, the most popular text being the Bible. Passages from the Bible were read to suit particular occasions or events in Church services and in Monasteries, and served as both a religious anchor and a form of entertainment in medieval Europe (Chartier 30). Reading aloud, implicitly in fragmented sections, was the predominant form of dissemination (Chartier 30). This fragmentation continues today, selective reading augmenting the process of fragmentation whereby we absorb information from books. Even during contemporary times, non-fiction works are rarely read in their entirety. The reason scholarly articles have abstracts and tables of content is to allow researchers to avoid reading complete articles to locate the information they desire.

On the subject of selective reading, Ingold confirms that the intent of text was to promote orality. In Medieval Europe, “the scripture of medieval times... was understood not as something made, but as something that *speaks*” (Ingold 13, original emphasis). As already mentioned, medieval Europe was a society of orality, and certainly books at that time (laboriously hand-written), were intended to be read aloud. He continues: “literate folk in medieval times...were using their eyes to hear, modelling their perception of the written word upon their experience of the spoken one, rather than vice versa” (Ingold 14). With so few literate people able to read aloud, it was inevitable that the act of reading was never silent, so that the readers could share the knowledge they were reading. The

result, Ingold explains, is that those literate individuals were more likely to listen to their own voices as they read aloud, or recall the voice of another individual they had previously heard reading that same text (14). “[F]ar from being the silent and solitary contemplation of the written word so familiar to us today, reading [during the medieval times] mean[t] a public, spoken act within a community” (Ingold 14). Monastic readers would “follow the text with their lips as much as with their eyes, pronouncing or murmuring the word sounds as they went along...The more they read, the more their heads would be filled with a chorus of such voices” (Ingold 14). Contemporary readers do not read aloud nearly as often as Monastic readers did, and they consider sound a physical phenomenon unrelated to the act of reading; the orality associated with reading in the medieval ages is relegated to imagination and times past (Ingold 15).

Conversation, another aspect of fragmentation, is the writer’s attempt to connect to the reader. In doing so, they interrupt their narrative voice to directly addresses the reader. Although transformed into text, Bacon herself acknowledges the orality present in her published poetry. “Nous sommes un peuple de tradition orale. Aujourd’hui, nous connaissons l’écriture. La poésie nous permet de faire revivre la langue du *nutshimit*, notre terre, et à travers les mots, le son du tambour continue de résonner” (Bacon 8). She invites readers to engage in conversation in two ways. The first is through her narrative voice, using plural second-person to address the audience, a technique that Bordeleau and Fontaine also utilize in their poetry. Using “tu” and “nous” (“you” and “we”) literally addresses the reader. This type of narration is common in Indigenous poetry, and succeeds at requesting that the reader join the writer in their journey. The second method Bacon uses is literally inviting the reader to join her in conversation:

Accompagne-moi pour faire marcher la parole,
la parole voyage là où nous sommes,
suivons les pistes des ancêtres pour ne pas nous égarer,
parlons-nous... (Bacon 8).

Bacon invokes conversation with the reader in this passage (which is part of her introduction), yet immediate conversation between reader and writer is impossible. Her invitation is a metaphor for the type of journey auditor and performer would take together had this been a performance, rather than someone reading her work. This gesture to include orality in her work is an effort to include as much of her culture as possible, to incorporate as much orality as possible into her book. Be it written or spoken, translated to French and English or published in the original Nutshimit in which it was written, Bacon wants her message shared as true to the original medium as possible: the act of oral storytelling, and the sharing of her culture.

2.3 Remediation

Remediation is the process by which a message is transferred from one medium to another. For example, adapting a play to cinema is an act of remediation, since some of the essence (or property) of the play is preserved in the transformation, but the medium changes. It is interesting to note during remediation, the property is preserved to varying degrees. For example, in the films *10 Things I hate About You* (a remediation of *The Taming of the Shrew*), and *O* (a remediation of *Othello*), little other than the bare-bones plot of the Shakespearean plays on which they are based is remediated. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin explore this topic in great detail in their book *Remediation:*

Understanding New Media. They point out that the remediated product rarely credits the original work (as is the case with all three films that do not mention Shakespeare), and that the act of remediation is by no means a new practice.

[In remediation, the] content has been borrowed, but the medium has not been appropriated or quoted. This kind of borrowing, extremely common in popular culture today, is also very old. One example with a long pedigree are paintings illustrating stories from the Bible or other literary sources, where apparently only the story content is borrowed (Bolter et Grusin 44).

This example of remediated paintings from the Bible perfectly illustrates the recycling of material that is now so common, and will continue to be forever. Whether by plagiarizing or being inspired by another artist's work, humans are adept at borrowing content. Remediation differs from plagiarism, because the former requires that the medium be different, while in the latter, the medium can be the same. If I were to copy an entire chapter from Bolter and Grusin's book, that would be plagiarism; if I were to choreograph an interpretive dance based on their work, it would be an act of remediation.

When Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine put their stories and poems into print, they are remediating their own work that originated in oral storytelling. Changing the medium from orality to print changes the message, because of the communication that is present during oral performance (as discussed in section 2.2). Marshall McLuhan's famous quote "The medium is the message" implies that the form in which a message takes is more important than the message itself, meaning that when Indigenous poets publish their work, it changes meaning. Allen, who was quoted at the beginning of this chapter, argues the opposite. She claims that it is not the medium in which one presents their ideas that is important, but the impact that doing so creates. She asserts that the impact of the message is all that matters, regardless of medium.

‘The medium is the message,’ is not solely about the technology or the ‘medium’ or even the effects of the medium or the message, but about impact. About how the effect of message and medium/media change who we are as a society and as a planet. From this context, *the impact of the work of Indigenous poets, not just their writing, is the real message*, to be adequately charted, assessed, and understood (Allen 300, emphasis added).

Like McLuhan, Chartier emphasizes the inseparability of the medium and the message.

While mapping the evolution of the written word and the book, Chartier articulates the notion that the medium is intrinsically related to the message:

le possible transfert du patrimoine écrit d’un support à un autre, du codex à l’écran, ouvre des possibilités immenses, mais il est aussi une violence faite aux textes, séparés des formes qui ont contribué à construire leurs significations historiques (Chartier 38).

With the evolution of the book, from the codex to the screen, works that have been remediated to the Internet arguably have a very different message than in their original form. Marshall McLuhan explains “the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph” (quoted in Bolter et Grusin 45). Using this perspective, one could argue that the content of Indigenous poetry is orality, and the content of orality is thought. And what is the content of thought? According to many Indigenous cultures, the basis for thought is dreaming. Accordingly, it is possible that all thought is a remediation of dreaming.

Dreaming is a strong motif throughout the works of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine. The presence of this theme indicates a strong connection to cultural origins, since dreaming has such significance among Canadian Indigenous nations. Marie Battiste, a Mi’kmaq academic, explains this connection: “Dreams generate the fundamental instructions from the Life Giver, the dynamic collective mind of each

indigenous nation's nation" (Battiste 39). This statement that dreams hold instructions from the Life Giver implies that they dictate destiny, and should therefore be given the highest degree of respect. Indeed, Battiste explains that mastery of this communication with the Life Giver leads to improved life quality.

In [Indigenous Knowledge], learning occurs when one masters the transformation of dreams into existence. It is a process driven by learning spirit(s) and visions. The mystic pulse of learning is the ability to cross from the mysterious realm of dreams and embodied spirit(s) of an implicate order to improve life and well-being. It is the ability to translate, interpret or guide imagistic and affective communications into rational thoughts and pragmatic actions or behaviours. It is the mastery of human potential, however it is inspired.

Every indigenous child is conceptualized as born from and with relations of the spiritual realm and the earth dream (Battiste 39).

The notion that children are conceived not through body but through dreams is a beautiful concept, and a testament to the utterly high importance that dreams take in Indigenous culture.

Edna Manitowabi, quoted in L. Simpson's *Dancing on our Turtle's Back*, also testifies to the cultural importance of dreams. "Dreamtime has always been a great teacher for me. I see my dreams as guides or mentors, as the Grandfathers and Grandmothers giving me direction in my life. Dreams are how my own spirit guides me through life" (L. Simpson *Dancing* 35). If dreams are a metaphorical life source, and ideas hatched in dreams are political ideas that can be executed in the waking world, then we must all pay more attention to our dreams.

Dreaming appears regularly in Bacon's work. She is inspired by her origins, her relationship to the natural world, and the struggle of the Innus against globalization in the wake of colonialism. She addresses the destabilization of her origins as a result of

colonization and residential school trauma throughout her collection of poems, including the following passage:

Je ne me souviens pas toujours
d'où je viens
dans mon sommeil,
mes rêves me rappellent
qui je suis...
[J]amais mes origines
ne me quitteront (Bacon 98).

Although she doesn't always remember where she is from, her dreams remind her. No matter where she sleeps each night, her dreams bring her back to her origins. If Bacon can reconstitute her origins while dreaming, that gives further significance to her findings according to Indigenous paradigms.

In the following passage, Bacon relates the strong cultural ties that connect her to her heritage, connections that reveal themselves through her dreams. She communicates this by explaining to the reader in the second person that they also experience this dream connection:

Ton sommeil est habité
par les esprits de ton peuple métis
silencieux.
La nuit étoilée
T'emporte dans un monde
Qui te garde vivant (Bacon 110).

The inspiration that keeps one alive is found in their dreams. One's ancestors are present in their dreams, and this anchoring to their origin helps them survive in the waking world.

Like Bacon, Bordelau and Fontaine incorporate dreams as poetic anchors in their heritages. Bordeleau here explains that her ancestors reside in her very genes, and communicate with her each night in her sleep:

Devenus totems,

[Mes ancêtres] respirent dans l'univers secret
de me gènes.

Leurs voix m'appellent
la nuit, quand je dors (Bordeleau 22).

The image that Bordeleau's ancestors reside in her DNA is beautiful, because they are always with her, ever ready to emerge when she sleeps. This image parallels Bacon's, in that dreams reveal Bordeleau's origins.

Fontaine references dreams often, and even uses them as a venue for emotional processing. In the following passage, she heals Mother Earth by taking the metaphorical character's head onto her lap, foregoing sleep and sharing her dreams with her. She begins with the image of herself holding earth in her hands, attempting to heal it. Soil is composed of a mix of minerals, decomposing matter, and decomposers. Attempting to give life to inanimate objects with tears is futile, but the poetic implications of magic realism transform this plea to one of urgency. Furthermore, identifying herself as an unborn child, as well as calling on her ancestors, suspends the notion of time. Fontaine therefore makes this a timeless cry for action that evokes pathos from the reader:

Ma terre je la prendrai dans ma main
je la soignerai
avec un pan
ma jupe
essuiera ses larmes noires
mes cheveux ses joues creuses
je la bercerais en ses tremblements
je ne dors plus
l'endormirai sur mes genoux
et saluerai mes ancêtres de la main
avec le bégaiement
l'enfant à naître que je suis (Fontaine 33).

In the last line, she confesses to being an unborn child, which as Battiste explains, are creations that are conceived in dreams. In order to heal Mother Earth, Fontaine therefore became a dream, because dreams are the beginning, the fundamental aspect of life.

Another way in which dreams are used throughout the three authors' works is as a beacon of hope for an improved future. For example, in relation to women's rights, Bordeleau dreams of a peaceful time when women are guided by, and are able to realize their dreams:

Rêvons d'une aube tranquille,
rêvons d'un peuple de femmes
qui marche avec ses rêves
au son de son cœur tambour (61).

This quote is political in the context of the poem "Déclaration de paix de femmes" (found in the collection *De rouge et de blanc*). This poem is dedicated to Hélène Pedneault, a québécoise feminist who was very engaged in women's rights. Bordeleau connects dreams with political action, a combination that recurs throughout her book.

L. Simpson also recognizes the political association with dreams, connecting them with resurgence: "dreams and visions propel resurgence because they provide Nishnaabeg with both the knowledge from the spiritual world and process for realizing those visions" (L. Simpson *Dancing* 34). The process for realizing dreams may not always be explicit, and is often littered with significant obstacles. Nevertheless, "Dreams and visions provide glimpses of decolonized spaces and transformed realities that we have collectively yet to imagine" (L. Simpson *Dancing* 34). In dreams the imagination is unbridled, and free to imagine a world without colonization and cultural genocide, a world that promotes cultural expression. In the poetry excerpts referenced above, the dream world supports cultural identity.

In conclusion, the incorporation of orality and dreaming are cultural anchors that appear in the works of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine, and link their verse to Indigenous cultural beliefs. Orality is distinct from oral poetry, in that oral poetry is strictly performed as an oral medium, and orality may be present in print as well as being the medium of oral communication. The means of detecting orality are subtle, but include such clues as cyclicism (in references to natural cycles and the natural world, and repetition of phrases and themes that imply the reader has come full-circle), and fragmentation. The latter refers to the way in which oral conversations are not articulated as complete sentences. Additionally, the use of plural second-person to address the audience implies conversation, further evidence of orality. The presence of orality in poetry represents the Indigenous traditional knowledge that is imbedded, a gesture to resurgence that is explored in more detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RECLAIMING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN POETRY

This chapter begins by providing an analysis of the relation between decolonization and resurgence. The result of contemporary colonialism on Indigenous nations has been a divorce from their lands and cultures, as discussed in Chapter One. Cornthassel considers decolonization and resurgence synonymous, both being “interrelated actions and strategies that inform our pathways to resistance and freedom” (89). Alfred’s definition of colonialism (a detachment from *land* and culture) confirms that practicing resurgence is an act of decolonization. The idea established in section 3.1 that resurgence involves a strong connection to land provides the framework for section 3.2, where this connection is mapped in the poetry of Bacon, Bordleau and Fontaine.

Part of resurgence and decolonization is a focus on the use of local frameworks and Indigenous paradigms, a method that Tol Foster describes as relational regionalism. This is an example of a theoretical framework for resurgence. The poetry of Fontaine and Bordeleau attempts to inspire people into climate change action. Bacon also invites cultural activism, focusing less on climate change and more on cultural ties to the land. Because these poets do not subscribe to relational regionalism, and because of the small geographic confines relational regionalism implies, Foster’s theory is of limited use when considering these works; it nonetheless exemplifies one framework with which to consider certain problems, for example the violation of land treaties and the necessary consultations with the Indigenous nations to which the land in question refers.

Section 3.3 investigates stories as a theoretical basis for resurgence, and is built upon the incorporation of orality in Chapter Two. L. Simpson describes the importance of storytelling for the communication of Indigenous values within communities, as well as the positive effects of a social gathering. Storytelling aids political change, because like political meetings, it provides a venue for communities to gather and discuss obstacles that they face. Creation stories deal in metaphor, and the stories woven into the poetry cited in this chapter overtly address political issues, and therefore exemplify resurgence.

3.1 Decolonization

There is a strong connection between decolonization and resurgence. In his article “Colonialism and State Dependency,” Taiaiake Alfred defines colonialism as:

[A]n outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation—a *disconnection from land*, culture, and community—that has resulted in political chaos and social discord within First Nations communities and the collective dependency of First Nations upon the state (52, emphasis added).

This definition focuses on a severance between individuals and their land and culture, an imposition by the Canadian state that has lasted for centuries. It is interesting to note that resurgence is essentially a reversal of this definition. Resurgence is a *connection* to land culture and community, which seeks to assert *political autonomy* for First Nations from the Canadian state.

Tol Foster argues that academic institutions are fundamentally colonial. He explains that Indigenous people have always been American history’s “Other”, which recalls the theory of Eigenbrod from Chapter One, where the insider/outsider dichotomy

is discussed. Regardless as to who is on the “outside” or “inside”, polarization between Indigenous nations and descendants of European colonizers is a very convenient theoretical approach on which to default, because it is so manifest. This relative ease of perpetuating a colonial paradigm is the reason it still exists, and continues to damage Indigenous nations.

Native theorists are skeptical of even contemporary claims emanating from the academy. This concern with the danger of theory, of course, is somewhat ironic, given that a central contribution of contemporary theory has been support for this very skepticism (Foster 266).

Foster acknowledges the pluralistic nature of contemporary critical theory, in that it aims to debunk generalizations in other critical theory. Yet despite this irony, Indigenous theorists remain skeptical of occidental critical theory, because it often belongs to a colonial paradigm. Indigenous theorists therefore subscribe to other sets of belief, the most notable one being resurgence.

One such “contemporary claim” emanating from the academy, as referred to by Foster, is postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism stems from the study of colonized populations, and upon first investigation seems an apt fit for studying Indigenous issues. Yet postcolonialism generalizes about colonization experiences internationally, and is not sufficient to accurately depict all Canadian Indigenous experiences. Postcolonial theory “becomes too limited for recovering indigenous voices and subjectivities, let alone articulating Native truth claims and calls for justice” (Foster 267). Generalized claims are extremely dangerous, and detract from the integrity of research, since they can potentially propagate colonial stereotypes.

Regarding the generalization of people and theories, I would like to draw attention to the fact that resurgence, like postcolonialism, is a theory that generalizes. However,

this thesis is narrow in scope, investigating the poetry of only three poets to exemplify theory, so as not to risk negating a multiplicity of experience. The works of these three authors fall into what Renate Eigenbrod observes to be true of Indigenous writers: they “challenge preconceived identity constructions in a variety of ways” (*Travelling Knowledges* 43), thereby challenging the colonial notion that there is one monolithic Indigenous experience.

As a guide to reading Indigenous literature, Foster promotes relational regionalism, or a land-based contextualization of stories and theory. This entails reading each piece of Indigenous literature through the paradigm in which it was written, taking into account the precise sets of beliefs of the nation in which it was written. Relational regionalism is an example of resurgence, since it uses Indigenous paradigms and a connection to the land to analyze knowledge. One problematic aspect of relational regionalism is the concept of interzones; they are found between regional frameworks, where “different constituencies collide and, as a result, renegotiate their communal cultural frames” (Foster 272). Interzones can potentially cause turbulence, as various frameworks have the potential to contradict each other. It is necessary to be aware of the multitude of differences between various frameworks, and how they complement and contrast one another. Using multiple frameworks to interpret and reason through poetry provides a deeper cultural and literary understanding.

Accepting a theory because it is traditional or convenient leads to assumptions, which could in turn lead to misrepresentation. The multiplicity of experiences present among Indigenous nations would have been a cause of misrepresentation if I had chosen to analyze a broad spectrum of literature from various nations. For this reason I chose

such a small sample of poets with which to work, contrary to my original intention of surveying literature from across the country. In order to minimize friction between geographical paradigms, two of the poets (Bacon and Fontaine) are from the town of Pessamit, QC, while the third (Bordeleau) has a similar cultural background, also being from a Quebecois Indigenous community. All three poets exemplify decolonization in their poetry through a connection to the land, a claim that is proven in detail in the following section.

3.2 Land

As already established, L. Simpson considers resurgence to be an act of connecting to the land and to the traditional Indigenous practices of one's community. Connection to the land is a privilege, however, since some people face socioeconomic barriers that prevent them from leaving their homes in large urban centres. She indirectly addresses this issue, explaining that although it is critical to support a generation of Indigenous people who are able to "think within the land and have tremendous knowledge and connection [to the land and Indigenous culture], this doesn't have to take away from the contributions of urban Indigenous communities to our collective resurgence" (L. Simpson *Pedagogy* 23). She acknowledges that a large number of Indigenous people live in urban centers, and welcomes their contributions to the future of the resurgence movement. "Whether urban or rural, city or reserve, the shift that Indigenous systems of intelligence compel us to make is one from capitalistic consumer to cultural producer" (L. Simpson *Pedagogy* 23). Her call for action is therefore indiscriminate, welcoming all acts of

cultural expression, however slight they may be. Indeed, even such seemingly neutral platforms as social media forums have now become vehicles upon which resurgence can be promoted. Such hash tags as #resurgence, #indigenousresurgence, and #indigenusrising becoming a popular method of researching and sharing Indigenous cultural expressions on socialmedia platforms facebook and twitter.

Corntassel uses the term “acts of remembrance” to explain expressions of Indigenous traditions, and although I doubt he was considering social media when he coined this term, it still applies. To assert resurgence through acts of remembrance, one must commit daily acts of “truth-telling and resistance to colonial encroachments [which are] just as important as the overall outcomes of these struggles to reclaim, restore, and regenerate homeland relationships” (Corntassel 89). Part of truth-telling is including difficult aspects one’s culture, for example testimonies of residential school experiences. In the following stanza, Bordeleau describes a parenting relationship in a dysfunctional family, one result of the residential school legacy. She incorporates the perspective that many of the people who attended residential schools were robbed of their ability to parent through psychological abuse.

Reddition

Ses insomnies dans tes matins d’ivresse,
tes passages sur d’autres chairs
du mépris pour sa peau blanche.

Ses yeux pers, secs et froids
ont libre une guerre extrême
aux tiens, noirs, sauvages.

La valise dans la voiture, elle dit :
aux vacances, tu prendras ton fils.

La nuit sortie de tes prunelles,
tu as enfin parlé de toi (Bordeleau 28).

The subject matter of this poem is child custody, called to question because of the father's role as an absent parent. The Caucasian mother (with eyes that are "*pers, secs et froids*") packs her bags and takes the child away with her, saying that the Native father will have access to their child during the vacations. The father has implicitly not taken an active role as a parent ("*tes matins d'ivresse*"). As already indicated, addressing the issue of poor parenting skills is symptomatic of residual residential school trauma in primary and secondary survivors. Although not explicitly political, this stanza is an act of remembrance that unites other individuals who have experienced such events, emphasizing that aspect of Indigenous identity needs more attention. According to Cornthassel's definition, this passage constitutes resurgent poetry.

In section 3.1, Alfred asserts that colonialism entails a disconnection from the land, and resurgence encourages a connection to the land. Accordingly, Fontaine's poems are decidedly decolonial, in that they are a celebration of the earth from an Indigenous perspective. The themes in her work are inexorably linked to the land, her culture and her community: "Alors, puisque je suis ici à embrasser le sol de ma terre, *Assi*, je libérerai ses chants de femme" (6). The very title of the collection includes a pun on land: *assi* means "seated" in French, as well as "earth" in her native language, innu-aimun (Fontaine 5).

Fontaine references the initial interactions between European colonizers and Indigenous nations. The land her ancestors inhabited was stolen through land treaties that took advantage of Indigenous illiteracy. Her poetry speaks to this origin of colonial trauma:

Tous les chemins
mènent à Rome
tu m'as dit
Tous tes chemins

m'ont menée au soleil
je t'ai dit
Et tu m'as nommée
nouveau monde (Fontaine 42).

As though addressing the first settlers, Fontaine speaks for Mother Earth. An illustration of paradigm differences, the French settlers viewed the pilgrimage leading to Rome as the ultimate spiritual absolution, the Vatican being the epicenter of the catholic world. Fontaine contrasts this religious affiliation with her own, claiming that all roads lead to the Sun, an indication of the degree to which Fontaine is connected to nature. Another way to interpret these two locations (Rome and the Sun) is as spatial anchors, as discussed in Chapter One. The very different spatial anchors represent the opposing paradigms to which the colonizers and colonized belonged. In the final two lines of the stanza, Fontaine addresses the fact that colonial language overpowered her own, actually renaming the earth on which Indigenous nations had lived for millennia prior to the arrival of colonizers as the “new world.”

Fontaine feels very strongly about the social injustices committed against her ancestors. She articulates this violence quite graphically in her verse, invoking social justice issues that originated in land ownership disputes.

Les troupeaux
noyés l'insouciance
m'ont ouvert les veines
je leur ai donné mon sang
versé mes ancêtres
ont abreuvé le pays (Fontaine 77).

The reference to opening her veins invokes the mental health issues that so many Indigenous people struggle with as a result of residential school trauma. The fact that “les troupeaux” opened her veins indicates that she feels literally bled dry by colonial entities.

The result of this assault is an outpour of her ancestors, who live in her blood, back into the earth. This powerful stanza encapsulates the relationship she perceives between Indigenous nations and colonists. The result of this violent relationship is her blood in the earth, a metaphor for the violation of Indigenous nation's relation to the planet.

In an effort to save the planet from climate change that would render it inhospitable to humans, Fontaine defends the land she considers so important, addressing the entire country. She defies Foster's preference for engagement uniquely with one's own community, so as to maintain relational regionalism. Fontaine's political scope reaches from Quebec across the nation to Alberta's tar sands:

Ma soif est un manifeste.
Puis, il y a l'Alberta, Fort McMurray, Athabasca.
Où je bute. Où je me blesse. Où je hurle la famine de mon peuple.
Où je dirai à tout l'univers, ce monde, 'cessez le massacre!' (Fontaine 6).

Her desire for a land free from colonial confines and Western consumerism is emphasized with quotation marks in the final three words "cessez le massacre!". As though echoing the cry that people across the country are chanting, Fontaine speaks not only for Indigenous people and social justice, but also environmental issues that affect all inhabitants of the earth. Indeed, Fontaine feels committed to the earth, and uses her poetry to affect change, as she attests in the introduction to *Manifeste Assi*: "Il y a moi. Forte d'un nouvel éveil. Il m'aura fallu voir un mouvement transformer le visage des foules, de ma province, de mon pays, pour que je puisse atteindre cette force du tonnerre d'un espoir grandiose" (Fontaine 5).

In the same way that Fontaine defends the earth, which is an articulation of resurgence, Thomas King emphasizes the fact that land always has been a commodity in State-Indigenous relations :

The Lakota didn't want Europeans in the Black Hills, but Whites wanted the gold that was there. The Cherokee didn't want to move from Georgia to Indian Territory (Oklahoma), but Whites wanted the land. The Cree of Quebec weren't at all keen on vacating their homes to make way for the Great Whale project, but there's excellent money in hydroelectric power. The California Indians did not ask to be enslaved by the Franciscans and forced to build that order's missions.

What do Whites want? The answer is quite simple, and it's been in plain sight all along.

Land.

Whites want land.

Land. If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians in North America, you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land. Land contains the languages, the stories and the histories of a people. It provides water, air, shelter and food. And land is home (King 216).

This passage is cited from his well-known book *The Inconvenient Indian*, which is a history of the highlights of Indigenous affairs in North America. King emphasizes that land is the point of contention between the Canadian state and Indigenous nations, the reason for colonialism in the first place. Natural resource extraction from Indigenous land and violations of land treaties continues to occur. Awareness of the limits of natural resource extraction, and other abuses to the Earth, is essential in our current crisis of climate change. If we were to apply the theory of resurgence to policy in the Alberta tar sands, for example, all extraction of resources would immediately desist.

Fontaine directly engages with the issue of pipelines in the following citation. She makes political outcries towards injustices that occur throughout North America, referring to the pipelines that traverse the nation, as well as the buildings in which residential schools existed.

Je présenterai un feu immense
je brûlerai les écoles résidences
les papiers lois
Et d'un seul coup de vent
chasserai d'une main tous les pipelines

.....

Les caribous

les bisons les chevaux
les cerfs viendront
avec la terre
noyer les oléoducs
.....

Nous incarnerons un feu immense (Fontaine 64).

Her anger is strong in this verse, as she speaks of arson and sabotage against the oil extraction industry of the tar sands. Her anger is twofold: anger against colonial institutions for generating the residential school trauma, as well as violations against mother earth and perpetuating climate change. This passage proves her stance as an activist for Indigenous issues, as well as the land, which are entwined.

Although Fontaine's call for political engagement transcends borders across Indigenous nations throughout Canada, the question of one's right to speak for others must be addressed, in an effort to maintain integrity of critique. An advocate of the use of tribe-specific Indigenous frameworks to analyze local problems, Foster's theory implies that in order to study Indigenous issues, one must be an expert within the culture, as well as identify as an Indigenous person. "We cannot, after all, arrive at the destination 'indigenous,' without having journeyed through life in particular communities/culture-specific places" (Foster 269). He suggests that critics of Indigenous issues must research their own local culture of origin to initiate cultural restoration projects (Foster 269). Fontaine speaks for Indigenous people across the nation, which contrasts with Foster's claim that individuals may only speak for themselves and their small community. This difference in scope is not necessarily conflicting since the local framework, which Foster calls for, could be large based on the nature of the analysis. Yet in the case of Fontaine, a simple plea for political action needs no culture-specific framework, since it calls to all people for climate action, be they Indigenous or not.

In contrast to Fontaine, who invokes violent images in her verse, Bordeleau expresses a connection to the land in her poetry through praising the earth's bounty and beauty as well as calling for action. Her poems are not as explicitly political as Fontaine's, but she firmly positions herself as an activist by addressing climate change.

C'est sur le commerce sans conscience
et sans limites
qu'il faut ériger des barrages,
pas sur les rivières.
Aurons-nous bientôt la sagesse
de signer un traité de paix
avec la terre ? (Bordeleau 49).

In this passage, Bordeleau calls for a peace treaty that we, the inhabitants of planet Earth, should sign with the Earth. She also refers to humans as the children of Mother Earth, who are killing their planet. This is not a poem about colonialism or resurgence, it is simply a call to stop climate change. The personification of mother earth in this verse, and her ironic suggestion that we sign a peace treaty with her, gestures to the precariousness of humanity, in an environment that is becoming inhospitable to us of our own design.

Bordeleau continually decries the extent to which we have violated our planet throughout her collection, always referring to humans (all humans, indigenous and non-indigenous), as her children.

Notre Terre-Mère se meurt de ses enfants.
Notre maison commune est menacée,
et avec elle, notre espèce.
Nous sommes sur le même bateau.
Nous avons la complicité des naufragés.
La paix n'est plus une question de choix,
c'est une question de survie (Bordeleau 52).

She refers to humans as all being in the same boat, sharing responsibility for the drowned. This implies that she considers all humans, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to share responsibility and punishment for the horrible violations to the environment our society has sustained. This notion that we are all on the same boat is a cross-cultural reference. Not only does it feature in many Indigenous legends, for example the boat present on the Canadian five-dollar bill that marked the beginning of life on Mother Earth for the Haida Gwaii, but also the colonists who arrived by boat. This universal imagery is does indeed suggest that we are all in it together, and climate change will be indiscriminate.

To be fair, some poems in Bordeleau's collection are very politically charged, even if they do not attain the same passionate rage that Fontaine communicates in her poetry.

Je suis d'une race déposée
et d'une race à la recherche d'un pays.
.....
Je suis d'une femme
que l'on appela sauvagesse
à unique langage
et au silence lourd
face à son identité perdue (Bordeleau 11).

This reference to her ancestry of dispossession very obviously shows her view of the history of colonization as angry. One emotion conveyed in this passage is despair at a "lost identity", resulting from a disconnection from the land. She is "in search of a country", seemingly because hers has been taken from her.

Although Bacon does not address all of Canada like Fontaine and Bordeleau, her verse is accessible and appealing to readers from all cultural backgrounds because of her heartfelt love of the land. The title of her collection of poetry *Bâtons à message Tshissinuashitakana* is a reference to natural benchmarks Innu nomads used to mark

seasonal paths between costal regions and inland. Bacon's ancestors followed the snow tracks of those who had gone before them; when the snow melted, they followed the *bâtons à message* (Bacon 16). Bacon writes about her culture's relation to the land, not with regards to climate change, but in relation to lost understanding. There is sadness in her verse, because she is beginning to forget her traditional Innu land-based knowledge, and will be unable to transmit it to her descendants.

Les anciens
marchaient sans cesse
ils tiraient leurs traîneaux
sur la neige
et quand elle fondait,
ils naviguaient.
J'ai perdu la trace
de leur passage
vers la terre dénudée
sans guide
pour m'orienter (Bacon 22).

Bacon expresses her lack of connection to land and culture, as she can no longer find the tracks of those who have gone before her and feels disoriented. Her collection of poetry embarks on a gathering of fragments of her culture as she remembers it, in an attempt to rediscover the tracks she has lost. In this way, the title is a metaphorical invitation inviting readers to join Bacon on a journey of cultural awakening and education. This process therefore exemplifies resurgence perfectly, because although she does not overtly explain how to survive off the land, she attests to the importance of traditional knowledge. Although her cultural references manifest very differently from Bordeleau and Fontaine, all three exemplify expressions of resurgence through unique approaches.

Another way in which Bacon's *Bâtons à message Tshissinuashitakana* combats colonialism, and therefore classifies as resurgence, is through the presentation of the

translation. The French translation is on the left page, and the original text in nutshimit is on the right page. Using the western linear notion that writing begins on the left and ends on the right, we would assume that Bacon originally wrote in French and then translated her poetry to nutshimit, as is regularly the case for translated works (the original is always on the left hand page). Yet this is not the case, since Bacon originally wrote in nutshimit. This rejection of western publishing norms indicates that Bacon preferred to subtly reject the linear norm of occidental publishing.

3.3 Stories

We have already established that literature can be a form of resistance material through cultural expression. That discussion focused on published works by three Indigenous authors, and did not necessarily incorporate oral works such as Creation stories, that by virtue of their content are usually told by parents to their children. L. Simpson embarks on a discussion of the importance of Creation stories as the basis for Nishnaabeg resurgence, since they are a primary introduction to Nishnaabeg culture for youth. Her argument is that such stories flourish into political expression. Creation Stories set the “theoretical framework... [and] give us the ontological context from within which we can interpret other stories, teachings and experiences” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 32). Using Creation stories, Nishnaabeg youth apply the values learned within that paradigm to interpret the events of life. “Our Elders tell us that everything we need to know is encoded in the structure, content and context of these [Creation] stories and the

relationships, ethics and responsibilities required to *be* our own Creation Story” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 33, original emphasis).

By using Creation stories, Nishnaabeg communities foster the continuation of Indigenous thought. L. Simpson expresses the continued need for “individuals and assemblages of people who can think in culturally inherent ways” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 31). “Culturally inherent” refers to ways of thinking that reflect the “diversity of thought within our broader cosmologies, those very ancient ways that are inherently counter to the influences of colonial hegemony” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 31). Storytelling is an act of decolonization, since it brings Nishnaabeg characters to existence, proving to young listeners that their culture is accessible. “Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism, where we can create models and mirrors where none existed, and where we can experience the spaces of freedom and justice” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 33).

Another key component of storytelling is its communal implications. Storytelling requires the physical gathering of people, promoting exchange and dialogue. A necessary aspect of this performance is the exchange of reaction between the audience and performers, as was discussed in Chapter Two. Storytelling strengthens the bonds between families, friends and community. It provides individuals with a framework to imagine and critique social spaces, and critique colonial metanarratives that are so manifest (L. Simpson *Dancing* 34). Indigenous theoretical frameworks, which Creation Stories seek to promote, differ greatly from western ones: “the spiritual world is alive and influencing; colonialism is contested; and storytelling, or ‘narrative imagination,’ is a tool to vision other existences outside of the current ones by critiquing and analyzing the current state

of affairs, but also by dreaming and visioning other realities” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 40). Through communal storytelling, Indigenous frameworks are therefore explored, not only by delving into Indigenous culture, but also through the communal aspect of storytelling, which necessitates agreement and encouragement to the performers from the audience. This type of communal exercise, when compared to western frameworks, is completely unique.

Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine all incorporate storytelling into their poetry by referencing Creation stories, and incorporating orality (as was established in Chapter Two). In the following stanza, Fontaine invokes the wrongs done to the land by colonial infrastructure, including the construction of railway tracks and the “serpents virulents” that have infested North America:

Ici le ciel est si bleu
mon cœur si noir si brut si explosion dedans
trop plein de tes chemins de fer abrupts
tes serpents virulents sur mon île ma Tortue (Fontaine 83).

The final reference of the stanza is to “turtle island”, a reference to the Creation story that the world as we know it was built on the back of a turtle. The fact that Fontaine incorporates Creation stories into her work further situates her stance as decidedly anticolonial, and exemplary of resurgence.

Like Fontaine, Bacon also alludes to Creation stories in her poetry. Bacon refers to her grandmother the whale who protects her, a reference to the interconnectivity of all living creatures so manifest in Creation stories. The notion that animals have equal importance as humans is an aspect of Creation stories that is not found in Western logic.

La vague m'appelle
vers le large,
où nous naviguons

Et si *Akuanutin* se lève,
ma grand-mère
la baleine
m'empêchera de deriver (Bacon 94).

Grandmother whale watches out for Bacon, helping her to make the right choices in life, as indicated in the final line. By writing about her protector, Bacon normalizes the Innu belief that animals are of equal importance as humans. Using this logic, it would follow that as humans in the midst of rapid natural resource extraction and extreme consumerism, we should desist this depletion and protect non-human inhabitants of the earth, as well as ourselves, from climate change.

This connectivity to nature and the animals is paralleled in Bordeleau's work, when she refers to the "people of the woods" (woodland creatures), the "people of the water" (marine animals) and the "people of the sky" (creatures of flight). Again, this aligns with Creation stories, where all animals are considered and treated as equals to human beings.

Sur notre terre,
il y a aussi les peuples d'écorce et de bois,
les peuples des forêts,
les peuples de l'eau
et les peuples du ciel
qui cohabitent avec nous.
Leur vie est indissociable
de notre propre survie.
Ces peuples parlent
la langue silencieuse de la vie... (Bordeleau 48).

Through referencing Creation stories, Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine all help their readership localize and authenticate their poetry. The Creation stories to which they allude exist in the paradigm of storytelling, a paradigm that furthers the practice of resurgence.

The incorporation of storytelling into poetry, as well as into the daily lives of Indigenous people has aided the furthering of resurgence. The use of land-based knowledge, an aspect of Indigenous paradigms, to investigate daily events also helps in the uprising of resurgence. L. Simpson celebrates such connections with the land, and claims that engaging with the natural world and storytelling improves communities. Bacon, Fontaine and Bordeleau all exemplify resurgence through allusions to Creation stories and land-based inspirations, making their poetry the type of works that help readers connect to others and the natural world within Indigenous frameworks.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous resurgence is gaining momentum across Canada, not only in the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine, but also on social media, in critical theory, and in the policy of Indigenous nations as well as the Canadian state. This thesis has delved into the decolonization of language and citizenship, the mechanics of resurgence, and how resurgence is manifested in the poetry of three poets. Despite their belonging to three different generations, each incorporates resurgence into their work, heralding the beginning of a future where there is no difference in quality of life in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

The first chapter provides a literary analysis of colonialism in the study of Indigenous literature. It begins by exploring the relationship between language and paradigms, most notably the colonial implications of French and English. France and England colonized Canada, and any expression of activism in their languages is ironic, as LaRocque acknowledges. She also questions the ability of colonial languages to critique Indigenous literature, since Western objectivity is impossible:

The discourse of ‘bias’—or its apparent opposite, ‘objectivity’—is of particular interest to Aboriginal scholars. The essence of the dominant Western narrative is its claim to ‘objectivity’... objectivity is simply assumed by utilizing techniques of supposed absence” (LaRocque 28).

The notion that Western narrative can be objective is optimistic, since complete objectivity remains impossible, regardless of the field. LaRocque claims that Native voice in scholarship has been “swiftly stigmatized”, and that “White North American voice over Native history and cultures has been normalized” (29). There is an obvious

lack of Native voice in Canadian academia. Having studied Indigenous literature throughout my academic career, none of my professors have been Indigenous (barring visiting lecturers who did not have tenure). My personal experience is by no means conclusive, but is nonetheless indicative.

As a writer, Bordeleau values the written word immensely, and writes in French. She sees the French language as an avenue of decolonization, as well as a necessary method for sharing her poetry with the world. She sees writing as an apt vehicle for political activism:

D'écrire m'aidait à respirer, traduire pour moi seule ce besoin d'aller au-delà du quotidien parfois si lourd et dense. Plus tard le sujet de mon peuple relégué dans des réserves, ce souverain premier de ces immenses territoires, m'a prise comme un vent violent avant l'orage. Les gens que j'aime, sœurs et frères, la douleur pour celles et ceux qui partent, l'injustice pour l'oubli des femmes devant l'histoire... (Bordeleau 7).

Her dedication to her craft led her to stand for the rights of women unjustly forgotten in history (in reference to the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women). Bordeleau's incorporation of political issues into her poetry is something she shares with Bacon and Fontaine.

There is a need for reducing discrimination in academia (as Eigenbrod and Krupat assert) as well as in policy for Indigenous communities. Indigenous people have lower access to adequate healthcare (*Access National Aboriginal Health*) and education (*Education United Nations*) than non-Indigenous Canadians. In order to change this situation, political change must happen from within Indigenous communities as well as from non-Indigenous entities. Yet the rhetoric used when addressing Indigenous issues is mainly Western; for example, the laws that govern funding towards Indigenous affairs are written in inaccessible language that requires a Western education to comprehend.

The necessity for resurgence, and the incorporation of Indigenous schools of thought in political and academic movements, must be accessible to a majority of Indigenous people, which they are currently not. Western theories of liberation from colonial constructs do not resonate with a majority of Indigenous Peoples, scholars and artists (L. Simpson *Dancing* 31). Although theory and politics with a focus on ending marginalization amongst Indigenous Peoples is valuable, the fact that it is not rooted in Indigenous thought excludes Indigenous people of all ages. “[Indigenous theory] not only maps a way out of colonial thinking by confirming Indigenous lifeways or alterNative ways of being in the world. Ultimately Indigenous theory seeks to dismantle colonialism while simultaneously building a renaissance of mino bimaadiziwin” (L. Simpson *Dancing* 32). Mino bimaadiziwin is an Ojibwe philosophy referring to the concept of balancing the four elements of health: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual (Mino bimaadiziwin *Manitoba*).

This draws to question my right to analyze and critique Indigenous literature and critical theory as a non-Native critic, since Indigenous scholars would be better able to represent themselves with an “insider” view. There has been much investigation into the right of westerners to act as non-Native critics, especially by theorists Eigenbrod and Krupat. Although there is a danger of perpetuating generalizations by analyzing and drawing conclusions, Eigenbrod and Krupat conclude that as long as the researcher proceeds with integrity and attempts to use Indigenous paradigms, the benefits of reducing discrimination against Indigenous people outweigh the costs of risking minor generalizations. Krupat analyzes the too-common process by which non-Natives address Indigenous issues, utilizing scapegoat mechanisms and victimizing marginalized groups

of people through dichotomies to perpetuate domestic imperialism, with the hopes that the establishment of ethnocriticism will help to eradicate such forms of institutional discrimination.

With the intention of finding balance in Indigenous modes of thought, critical theorists have independently developed theories that are synonymous with resurgence. Million's *felt theory*, Corntassel's trio of *Responsibility, Resurgence, and Relationships*, and Emma LaRocque's *dialogics of the oppressed* all address issues of empowerment from within local frameworks, focusing on language as a modern tool of decolonization. A. Simpson's case study of the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke shows that the right to refuse Canadian governance and mediation is the most viable way to maintain culture and autonomy, which is an embodiment of resurgence in local politics. The rejection of reconciliation and call for resurgence, as occurred politically in Oka, is a precursor to the direction Indigenous politics and studies will hopefully take in the future.

The second chapter analyzes how orality is present in the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine, and shows this to be a manifestation of resurgence. As LaRoque asserted in Chapter One, printed language is a colonial form that has been reclaimed by Indigenous activists. Transition from orality to print in Indigenous storytelling is a remediation between different media. The existence of remediation in the poetry of Fontaine, Bordeleau and Bacon is indicative of an overlapping between two cultures: those of orality and print.

For example, the original medium of Bacon's artistic expressions was orality, and she is one of the first in her generation to transpose Indigenous orality into publication. She is constantly guided by her cultural traditions, having originally written in Nutshimit,

and then translated her work to French. Of all the traditional practices she incorporates into her work, dreaming is among the most prominent in her verses.

Les ancêtres m'ont dit:
'Ton âme a rêvé bien avant toi.
Ton cœur a entendu la terre' (Bacon 34).

In this passage, Bacon's soul began dreaming before she existed. Indeed, in Indigenous frameworks, a child is conceived in dream before being conceived in the physical world. Dreaming guides thought, and incorporation of this dreaming is a manifestation of resurgence. Fontaine and Bordeleau also incorporate references to the cultural importance of dreaming into their poetry.

The third chapter further investigates the existence of resurgence in poetry, using stories and connection to the land as factors to prove the celebration of resurgence. In the wake of institutional colonialism, many forms of resistance have emerged from various theorists, many of which are synonymous with resurgence. This chapter sought to prove that a celebration of Indigenous culture was present in each of the three works, LaRocque argues that each and every work written by an Indigenous author is politically resistant: "...there are [colonial] resistance themes common to all [Indigenous] works, irrespective of genre, gender, era, or even chronology" (26). Works saturated in non-Occidental cultures are a rejection of the metanarratives that permeate Canadian literature.

Resurgence represents a pathway towards a future in which Indigenous culture is not denigrated. Alfred explains that "[i]n a culture deeply respectful of individual autonomy, the only real political power consists in the ability to persuade" (Alfred xix). I do not consider persuasion to be the primary role of literature, but literature's persuasive

abilities may be used as a poignant political tool. Resurgence is this persuasive tool, able to empower Indigenous people into activism and a renewed connection to their culture.

To conclude, I will refer to the following statement by Allen. She draws a comparison between justice and beauty, attributes that the poetry of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine all share.

Much of Indigenous poetics... is about freedom—freeing up sounds, words, and ideas that need to be alive in the world. I believe that in our communities the search for beauty is the search for justice. Poetry, by its very nature, is the literary means of representing ideas, values, the world, voice, and our relationship to language (Allen 293).

Allen considers beauty and justice synonymous, and poetry is both. The verse of Bacon, Bordeleau and Fontaine all exemplify this embodiment of ideas, values and voice that can be communicated to a wide audience. Just as “Indigenous poetics is about freedom”, poetry is a vehicle for resurgence. Through their beautiful and powerful assemblage of words, these three women celebrate their cultures, and bring awareness to readers of all cultural backgrounds of some of the obstacles Indigenous nations face.

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